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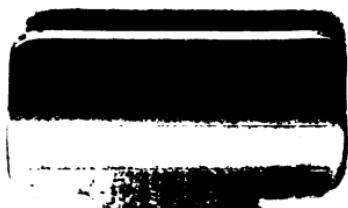
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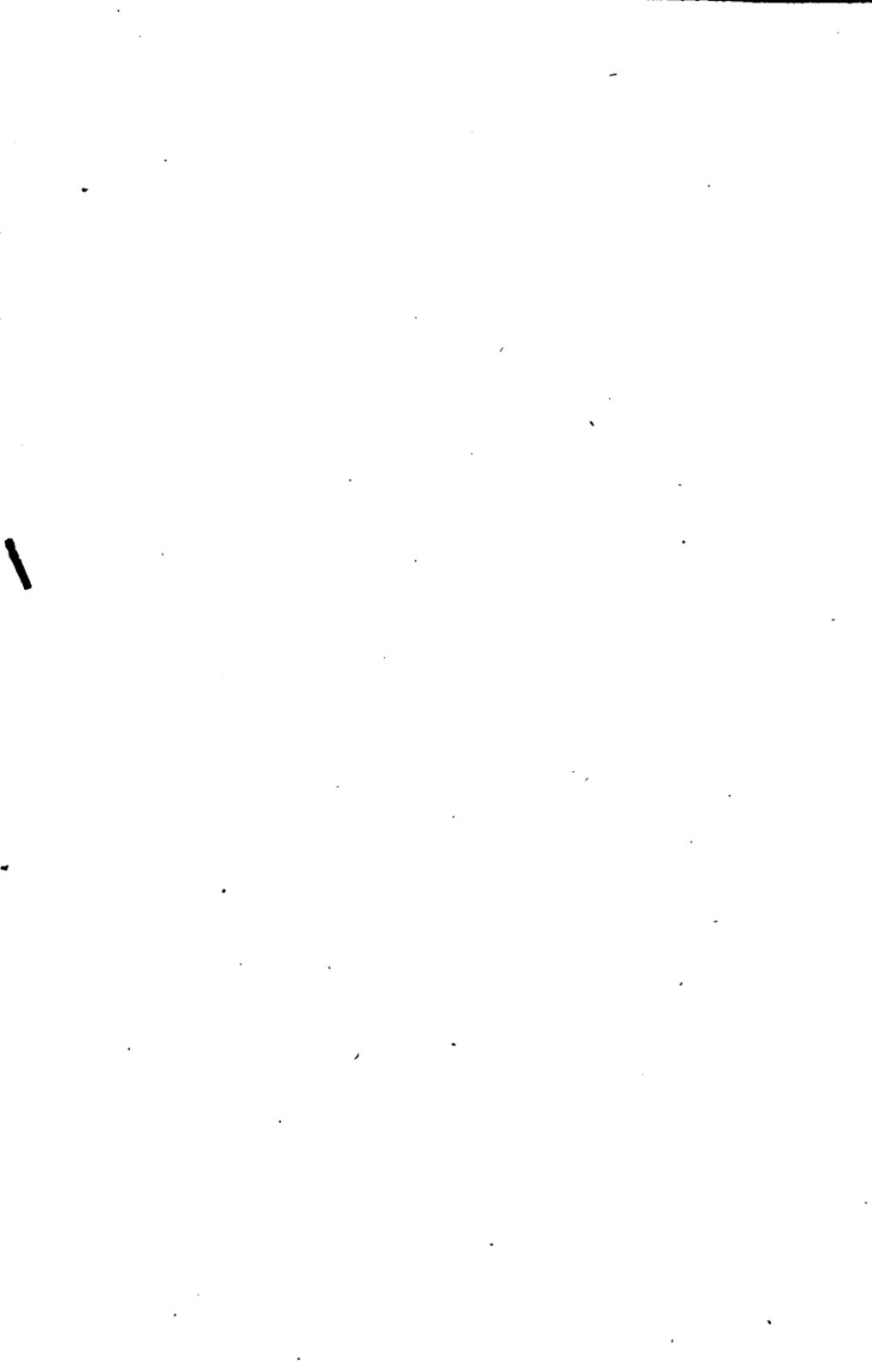
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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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1832.

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TO MR H.  
S. WHITING, BEAUMONT-HOUSE, STRAND.  
AMERICAN

UNIV. OF  
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THE JEW.

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CHAPTER I.

THE old citizen, Diether, possessed one of the most suspicious and undecided minds that ever agitated the breast of man. The discoveries which he had made during the late examination, had indeed gone far to remove his evil suspicions; but he nevertheless could not wholly get rid of them. That neither Margaret nor Dagobert had actually entertained the design of assassinating him; that neither his son nor his wife had deprived him of his beloved Wallrade; that the little Hans was really his own, and that Johannes had been provided by Willhild—was at length all very evident to him. The image of his wife, and of

# HO MIN AMROTLIAO

his noble Dagobert, had gradually grown fainter and fainter, but they again appeared brighter than ever, like stars beaming through a murky sky. He nevertheless still refused fully to acquit them, and was reluctant to admit the final proof of their innocence. He conceived that it was, at least, possible, that a criminal connexion had existed between them, and that little Hans was the fruit of it. And yet so variable, so contradictory is the human will, that in spite of his doubts, he now cherished the boy with all a father's fondness. In him he beheld the last prop of his sinking house, and of his declining years ; yet in the next moment he dreaded lest he might discover his illegitimacy.

Notwithstanding these fluctuations, and his increasing struggles between paternal attachment and a dread of imposition, he still continued to cherish the boy, as the last hope and sole object of his earthly love. Margaret's flight had been a severe blow to him ; the remembrance of which was like a rankling thorn in his breast. Should he repent of the conduct he had observed towards her ? Whither had she fled ? Could he entertain the hope of ever beholding her again ; and, finally, could he

console himself with the consciousness that he had not treated her more harshly than she deserved? Wearied and tortured with these doubts, he next turned his thoughts to Dagobert, whose return after what he had experienced, was not to be expected; and more especially so, since the innocent, as well as the guilty, suffer shame alike under the ban of outlawry, and are alike desirous of hiding themselves from observation. And, lastly, of Wallrade! had she not become the prey of a ruffian, perhaps a sacrifice to his murderous violence; and even should she again return to the paternal roof, in what manner could he receive her? Was he not bound to reject her, as she had broken the dearest ties, and even robbed him of a son? Had she not already begun a career of crime, as the fruits of it but too plainly bore witness—that little daughter, with whom the terrified maid had disappeared before it was possible to gain intelligence of her purpose? The girl had been thrown into the utmost agitation by the questions put to her by Diether, and was taxed with having been privy to Wallrade's secret connexion—an accusation, the truth of which she could no longer deny. The name of

him who had thus become united to Wallrade, was extorted from her; a name which Diether had never before heard. The origin of such an attachment, and the opportunities afforded until the lovers became united in marriage, she had apparently participated in. It happened that the lightning had set fire to a barn near Wallrade's residence, and the fire threatened to consume the huts of the servants, as well as the dwelling-house. The alarm-bell from the tower of the solitary hall assembled the people from the immediate vicinity, and among them was one who had been employed in the chase in the neightbouring forest, when the sound of the bell struck his ear, and who, by his prompt activity and presence of mind, rescued the principal part of Wallrade's property from the devouring element.

This assistance had given the young man, by no means wealthy, but handsome, and of a noble family, a sort of claim upon the lady's gratitude. Love was the consequence; but its enemy was at hand. The youth's father, holding in scorn the less noble lineage of Wallrade, agreeably to a former promise, asked in marriage for his son the hand of the orphan daughter of

an early companion in arms. On the other side, the lovers found a friend in need—a Dutch gentleman, who, in pursuance of his avocations, was staying at the next village, but was daily expecting to set out for Baldergrun. One evening he brought with him a monk into the farmer's court, who, having united the parties, gave them his blessing, and a child was in due time the fruit of this premature marriage.

Up to this period the elder, by his repeated threats, had brought the girl to confess her knowledge of the affair. From her evident confusion, it appeared there was yet some secrets which she was fearful of revealing. This rendered Diether only the more determined to extort a full confession—a confession which brought with it the unhappy conviction, that his beloved Wallrade was no longer the being whom he had believed worthy of his heart's best affections. It was true, indeed, she found a powerful defender in the priest, her uncle, whom misfortune had again driven back to the family mansion. But notwithstanding Diether's strong attachment to his reverend brother, his advice had no longer the same influence over him; for the elder had at length become aware

of his hypocrisy and assumed humility ; the old citizen's national predilections enabling him to weigh well the priest's words at what they were worth. The latter had incessantly railed at German society and customs ; prizing, on the contrary, those of Italy and its orders, though he was now driven from his second curé—the last at Cesena ;—compelled to shelter his head under a German roof—to eat his meals at a German table—to rely upon a German's property and humanity for supplying his wants, for out of all his high inheritance, with his Italian pride and grandeur, he had saved only that most equivocal jewel of all, the lively Florilla. It was no hard matter, then, for the watchful and suspicious Diether to divine the true nature of the connexion between the holy father and his friend. Its apparent scandal was nevertheless not very obvious, owing to the latter's age and infirmities, he being naturally enough in want of some one to take care of him ; and in part owing to the exceeding love lavished by Florilla on little Hans, who had lately lost both his female guardian and his nurse ; for Diether, on the first tidings of Margaret's flight, had, in his rage, driven poor Else, though deny-

ing all participation in the affair, from his house.

The child soon found, in Florilla's caresses more than he had lost by the absence of Else; and Diether, conscious of the love and care thus supplied, regretted only the accident which had deprived him of Wallrade's beautiful little girl, and that he had no means of ascertaining what had been the fate of the lovely Agnes. But with regard to its supposed mother, a very few days brought all in which she was interested to light.

One morning, a monk, worn by disease, pale and exhausted, and supported by a staff, stood at the elder's threshold. Diether's first impulse was to bestow alms upon the sufferer; but what was his surprise when the latter not only rejected them, but proceeded to impart to him the most astonishing intelligence. In few words, he acquainted him with the place of Wallrade's confinement; with particulars of her sudden flight; her return to her wretched captivity; the imminent peril she was now in; and that her last hope was anchored upon a father's love. That father, though pierced at once with agony and indignation at the thoughts of his daughter's

transgression, felt his heart—just before swelling with passion—sink within him at the account of her many sufferings. Prompt, however, as was his resolution to spare no efforts to rescue her from her present sufferings, there rose simultaneously with his better feelings the suspicions which ever haunted his peace. With a dubious eye he measured the monk from head to foot—sought to perplex him by a number of questions—and made it appear but too plainly, that he was inclined to take him for the agent of some villain, and his whole mission as some plot to obtain possession of his property—if not to deprive him of his life. For a moment the dim eye of the monk flashed with a sudden and indignant ray ; his lips trembled ; while his whole deportment was that of pride and scorn at the elder's vile suspicions. He soon, however, recovered his self-command, and replied in as mild a tone as his emotion would permit—that he would pledge himself to the truth of every word he had uttered ; that the raging fever by which he was consumed, and which had attacked him in an adjacent village—preventing him from keeping an important appointment in Franckfort—was moreover his best

witness that he had indeed been delayed in the place he spoke of; and should not assistance soon be afforded him, he now feared that he could not long survive. Shivering as he spoke these words, the cold seemed to strike through his vitals, and he almost sunk to the earth; while Diether no longer restrained the emotions of compassion by which he was overcome. He lost no time in having the monk conveyed on a litter into a monastery of the order, to which from his cowl, he seemed to belong; recommending him to the immediate care of father Reinhold, Margaret's confessor. He then hurried from the poor man, to communicate the intelligence he had just received to the council. His friends were astonished; while his enemies testified their disbelief by shaking their heads; maintaining, that he was trifling with the president and members, by repeating such improbable tales, and keeping the whole city in a state of agitation. "Had he mentioned any other character," they cried, "as the robber of his child, some kind of probability might have been attached to his declarations, but to name Bechtram von Bilbel of all others, that brave old campaigner, who had so long and faithfully served the city,

and who, only in the last truce, against undoubted claims, had united himself with the empire. Has not this very Bechtram made peace with us truly and confidently without colour of fraud, and in presence of most honourable witnesses — the knightly commanders of the German order? The whole account, therefore, must be a mere rumour; the elder is either himself imposed upon, or aiming to impose upon us—in short, the accusation is evidently groundless."

Thus was Diether's and the monk's veracity equally impeached, when the youngest burgo-master, with a countenance full of indignation, entered the assembly, followed by the host of Einhorn:—"God's vengeance," he cried, in a tone that marked some important event, "be upon all traitors and perjured villains! Prepare ye, my good lords and friends, prepare for a piece of news which our honest citizen and host here has brought you from Einhorn." The host then proceeded to relate, that for many years past the commercial traveller, Conrad Schwarz, commonly known, from his country and dialect, as the Suabian, had, while in the service of the famous house of Ulrich Artz at Augsburg, been often in the habit of putting up at the Unicorn,

which he had invariably left with the character of an upright man and a good paymaster. An instance of this had occurred only two days before, on the very day when Bechtram von Bilbel, with the friends and ambassadors of the council, had entered into treaty together. Nevertheless he, the host of the Unicorn, had received only that morning, through a peasant of the Farm at Main, a letter intrusted to him by the post-boy, and written by the Suabian himself, in which he states that Bechtram von Bilbel had met with him on the day of reconciliation in his way home, seized and dragged him from the road as far as Neufalkenstein, and had there compelled him to write this letter, to the purport that the host of the Unicorn should hasten with two hundred marks to effect his ransom. He, the said host, however, felt by no means disposed to comply with this request, being equally apprehensive of the safety of his money and of his own person. At the same time, he had thought it his duty not to omit bringing the affair before the noble members of the council, that they in their wisdom might do what they should deem best, if there were any means of rescuing the honest

traveller out of those wicked hands into which he had so basely fallen.

This account, corroborated as it was by the letter, excited the indignation of the whole assembly, and Diether's statement was now fully credited. The president and the elder's enemies who had so eagerly pledged themselves for Bechtram's integrity, now readily joined the party who were loudest in condemning him, and calling for vengeance upon the treachery and perjury thus betrayed by the old bandit in projecting such atrocious violence on the very day of concluding a treaty of peace. Dread of his ferocity, and that of his desperate comrades, however, now returned with double force; every mind was intently fixed on this newly committed outrage upon the free city, and every voice loudly raised for restoring to liberty the elder's daughter, a citizen of Franckfort, and the Suabian traveller. When the means for this, however, were taken into consideration, there was a vast conflict of opinions.

The boldest of the councillors were eager to try a *coup de main*, such as had been made in the year 1404, against Reickingew, the castle of Hans von Rudensheim. But the more cautious

opposed the idea of an open attack, which would only have the effect of uniting the bandit's force in some attempt upon the distracted and unprotected city; and they therefore strongly recommended the safer plan of stratagem; while the more timid proposed to call in the assistance of a neighbouring prince, a project indignantly rejected by the more patriotic feelings of the majority, who abhorred all thought of foreign interference in the affairs of their native city. Upon this a loud discussion ensued, which soon turned the council-chamber into a complete Babel, from which Diether was glad to escape. When alone, a crowd of thoughts rushed upon his mind, but they brought him no comfort,—no repose. He hastened home in the hope of finding some relief for his harassed mind in the society of his brother and little son. As he was about to enter, he was met by his valet Eitel. He acquainted his master with the arrival of Dagobert, who the next moment was seen hastening towards him. The father's surprise almost overpowered him; confusion and alarm were depicted on his countenance; his knees trembled, and he was compelled to grasp the railing of the steps in order to support himself.

Dagobert observed his sudden emotion, and flying to his assistance, conducted him tenderly into an apartment. Almost out of breath, he allowed himself to be placed in an arm-chair; and after some pause, in which he kept his eyes fixed upon the ground, he turned them upon the gentle, but anxious countenance of his son, who was seated opposite to him, and at length said, " You here, Dagobert! and Wallrade? " " My exertions have been vain," returned the son sorrowfully: " I might just as easily have discovered the Emperor Charlemagne, dwelling these six hundred years in the caverns at Nuremburgh. Yet I have been informed that you father, have some better intelligence, on which we have good reason to congratulate ourselves." " You — *you!* " exclaimed, Diether with an incredulous look! " Yes, Heaven is my witness—I too am glad," replied Dagobert, " I have indeed but little cause, to wish her well: only I prize my good name even higher than I do her, and rejoice that the city, and you also, father, will at length see that I was not concerned in Wallrade's abduction." These words, though spoken with mild earnestness, without the least feeling of

bitterness or reproach, brought the colour into the old man's cheeks. "His own conscience," he exclaimed, "is man's most dreaded judge;" to which Dagobert calmly replied, "that is true sir; my conscience, thanks be to God, is clear—clear as the beaming eye of childhood. Therefore is it that I am here, where the evil demon has been busy enough at work to blacken me in the estimation of the world. A more just and inoffensive being was never sought to be entrapped by his foul machinations, but only take him resolutely by the horns, father, and fling him from you."

"Thou speakest boldly," returned Diether, "eying him sharply."

"I put my trust in Heaven," replied Dagobert confidently; "I have continued faithful in trial; and God will not desert me now. Supported by him I feared neither the false accusations of the president, of the judge, nor of the priest my uncle, who has wormed himself into your favour; no, nor the holy tribunal which has honoured me with an invitation to appear before its bar." At these words, the blood forsook Diether's cheeks; "Unhappy boy," he cried, "thou blasphemest; fear thou that tribunal before

which the mask must fall from the sinner's face, and the truth be made manifest through the thickest disguise."

"I shun not the light of truth," replied Dagobert firmly. "Would to God that these unknown lords dared to establish it in the face of day; but even at midnight will I abide their call, and the holy court shall have to complain of no delay on my part."

"Your resolution is strong."

"Shall I allow myself to be vilified and dis-honoured—destroyed by the fangs of these wily reptiles, without a hearing—without defence? Or was the grave trial got up only as a farce, to be played just so long as it could find spectators, letting the curtain drop the moment the public is removed? Spite of the music-stirring band, I will still be there—I will boldly appeal to the judgment-seat, while I yield all due reverence, in order to learn who is he that has defamed me, and let him behold me stand purified from the malignant stain."

"Foolish confidence!" retorted Diether, petulantly.

"How I wish you could share that confidence with me, my father," said the young man, as he

sorrowfully took his parent's unwilling hand. "It is hard to think you are the first to cast the first stone, and the last to grant me a hearing to prove my innocence ! I have scarcely been able to recognise myself, since the time I became aware of your feelings towards me, and how greatly we are become estranged. I no longer know what to think ; I have probed my secret heart and thoughts ; and not one trace of impious feeling have I detected there. And yet you—the upright in soul—you can doubt of my truth ; you condemn me, though I am innocent as a child ! yet have I no means of defending myself against your accusations. On the contrary, I choose you for my advocate before the tribunal at Sachsenhausen ; and therefore do not refuse to accompany me thither, where the truth shall be made to appear through the thickest disguise."

Diether shuddered at these words, and the stings of conscience seemed to pierce him to the soul, insomuch that he could barely murmur forth a refusal to his son's request. Dagobert gazed sorrowfully at him for a moment, sighed deeply, and said : " You cast me off, my father ! I must then traverse my dark path alone. But

God is my witness, that it troubles me greatly to be thus rejected, where I know that, in my place, your Wallrade would never have appealed to you in vain."

"Not a word of Wallrade!" cried Diether, in an agonized and angry voice. "I am not to be taxed with injustice in apportioning my affection to my children. I loved Wallrade, for I believed her faultless; but now, even against her brother and her enemy, I do not pretend to defend her."

"I am not her enemy; I do not hate her," said Dagobert, calmly. "In spite of her hatred of me, I do not charge her with her faults; and dare venture to make oath before you, that this sister, and your daughter, was never worthy of bearing our name! Do you want——"

"Peace!" interrupted Diether, sternly. "I will not consent to hear from thy lips what I already know too well. Oh, what a triumph for thee and Margaret!" Dagobert shook his head, but was silent. The old man continued:—"Thou call'st my Wallrade a serpent nurtured in my bosom; say on most learned son; and what judgment do you award to Margaret? Wilt thou invest her with a halo of light, or

must thou be compelled to own that she has sinned still more deeply than thy sister?"

"No; this I cannot admit!" said Dagobert, no longer able to refrain from answering; "that she has been in fault, and behaved to you unworthily, I will not deny."

Diether here cast a look of triumph at his son, and cried out vehemently, "I thank thee, my God! that out of the sinner's mouth his own conviction has——"

"I am at a loss,—can I believe my ears?—what words have escaped your lips?" exclaimed Dagobert. "Mine, too, could pronounce bitter things from which they refrain, because I know that your Margaret is to me a second mother; but time will unfold what I now forbear to speak."

"Right, thou hypocritical libertine," said Diether, angrily; "disguise thy real nature in politic discourse. Thy misdoings nevertheless betray themselves, and a signal judgment will shortly overtake thee. Thou hast scrupled not to wound thy father's honour; thou hast trampled thine own in the dust. Thy life runs to waste in thy intrigues with the Jewess, of which the whole city is a witness."

"Father!" cried Dagobert, whilst his eyes

sparkled, and his voice trembled with emotion, “I have ever vindicated your honour, and never yet stained my own. Father, I say, whoever dares to asperse the pure fame of that unhappy girl, without a friend in the world, only because I became her advocate, because she is a Jewess—yes, and I shame not to confess it, deserving of all my love—whoever dare do this, I say, draws down upon himself my utmost scorn; yea, were I his own son. Intriguing do you call it? why the colours of the rainbow are not more pure than the innocence of that beloved girl: not even in thought have I ever wronged her spotless nature. Under the shield of my reverence and my love, the dove folds her wing in peace; never will I betray the secret home of her rest to her bitter enemies, though the funeral pyre should be lighted to consume me.”

“Cease, thou prating prodigal!” exclaimed Diether. “Show thyself in thy real colours; but fly the place where a free tribunal of Westphalians is to be assembled. Cease to heap sorrow upon sorrow on my head—even that of beholding thee at the place of execution, the victim of justice in the hands of the secret avengers, like——”

" But he was unjustly condemned," interrupted Dagobert, with strong emotion. " I were to be envied, poor worm, as I am, should mine be a similar lot. Father, I leave you. This house was once dear to me, as the home of my affections; here have I spent my young and happiest days; here I first learnt to love every familiar object; here was I first borne in the arms of a then kind father, and slumbered in the lap of an affectionate mother. But now that best of mothers is a saint in heaven, and that father's heart is turned to adamant, so that these walls seem too narrow for me, and these chambers appear even as a tomb. I go; I will spare you, my father, and my Italian uncle, the pain of again beholding me. Fare you well, I must go far hence, unregretted and alone; but God be with you, and bless you."

In another instant Dagobert had passed the threshold of his paternal home, struggling to repress the tears that started into his eyes. As he hastened out he met the little Hans, hand in hand with Florilla. She accosted the young man with a distant air, such as may often conceal a more gentle regard than is outwardly ex-

pressed ; while the boy ran joyfully towards him, asking to be lifted in his arms.

Dagobert was overcome with emotion and surprise ; he sat him silently down, without his usual caress. The little fellow began to murmur his reproaches at this coolness. “ Good mother is gone out, and Else is gone out, and the man there looks so wild and stern. What shall I do then, if you will no longer talk to me ? ” Dagobert looked tenderly upon the boy, gazing wistfully in his face ; then nodded his head to him, and said, “ Truly, thou poor child, thou art badly off in this place—worse than thou dreamest of, or dost deserve.” Here he turned quickly round towards Diether, but the words clung to the roof of his mouth, as he caught the angry eye of his father fixed upon him.

“ All is in the hands of God,” murmured the son within himself, as he bent his head sorrowfully over the poor boy. “ Good child ! ” he repeated half aloud, “ orphan as thou art, summon a good heart, and try to fortify it against what must and will happen. Should you ever become quite friendless, and I them

living, remember to come to me, and I will be in the place of a father to you!"

"Ah, yes," lisped the child, leaning his curly head mournfully on Dagobert's shoulder. "Yes—you will be my father, will you?"

"That will I, my son! By the blessed Father of spirits, it shall even be so," exclaimed Dagobert, no longer able to restrain his tears. He then embraced the boy, placed him on Florilla's knees, and rushed from the apartment. She drew the little fellow from the spot, where he had run to catch a last glance of his best friend, and put him upon Diether's knee. But the angry elder, dead to the appeal, thrust the child from him, exclaiming, "Go, go away to thy father, thou young wretch; and cursed be the hour in which my weak credulous heart betrayed me!"

## CHAPTER II.

IT happened, that on the evening of the same day on which Dagobert left his home, a fatal broil took place in the city. Situated in the new town was a notorious house, commonly called the Stein, and where many a young citizen had met a fate that led him to curse the day on which he was born. There were celebrated the mysteries of high play and loaded dice; there the wealth of young heirs, and the loose cash of travellers and casual visitors, speedily changed hands without any forms of law. Some left the place complete beggars, who had entered it with the pride and confidence of lords; and many a hopeless wretch, staking his last florin, found himself a man of substance before he again passed its threshold. It too often came to pass that the detected cheat was thrown headlong into the street, or was

delivered over to the arm of justice; and not unfrequently the punishment inflicted was to lose his eyes, in order to stop his sleights-of-hand. The miserable wretch was then left to throw himself into the Maine. Frightful as this retributive execution was felt to be, it had only the effect of rendering the players more wary in their proceedings; and there were still opportunities enough for adventurers from other parts, for light-headed young citizens, inexperienced chapmen, vain lordlings, *et hoc genus omne*, to find means of ridding themselves of their superfluous cash. In case some leader of the band was unlucky enough to be detected, knowing the fearful destiny that awaited him, he drew his weapon, supported by his companions, and the affair was in this way frequently kept secret from the world. The Stein accordingly too often became a scene of open bloodshed, when the force of law was barely sufficient to restore peace and order in this hell upon earth.

On the evening, then, above mentioned, an Italian sharper, who had been amusing himself at the fair of Franckfort, in spite of the denunciations of the council, had transported the se-

crets of his craft into their city, giving specimens of his powers at the Stein. As novelty is always found preferable to the old routine, the company of gamblers, many of whom were members of the wealthiest families in the place, entered into the plans of the foreigner, and compelled the owner of the house to adopt the new dice which he had brought from Italy.—The reputation they gained was speedily noised abroad. The Italian continued his career of success—his purse grew daily heavier, while those of his opponents were invariably emptied of the last gilder. But losing their patience almost as fast as their money, one of the most irritable seized upon the dice in a rage, and dashing them away, cried out—"Eternal curses be upon thee and upon thy infernal arts, thou most consummate of cheats." The dice having been loaded, always presented, when in the Italian's hand, the highest number, and being now broken by the force of the blow, the cause discovered itself. Upon this the whole of the company rose up; while the man who had been last fleeced of his gold ran towards the sharper in a rage, and drawing his sword, attacked him in the most desperate manner. The Italian,

however, was a practised fencer, and unsheathing his long rapier, not only defended himself, but, in spite of the interference of the company, and the cries of the host, at the third pass laid his assailant on the floor, weltering in his blood. The alarm, and the fall of the aggressor, put most of the party to flight, so that on the entrance of the police they found neither the murderer nor any witnesses to the fact: there was only the body of the dead man—soon recognised for the son of the chief justice—a wild and dissolute youth. When the affair got bruited abroad, it was generally observed that the public had sustained no loss; the father's feelings, however, were very different. This son was the only child who had survived out of many; and the judge now abandoned himself to the most abject despair. He was found next morning seated by the side of his son's corpse, clasping the clay-cold hand, and brooding over his own unhappy lot. The sun at length rose upon the house of mourning, bright as on that of joy; and the afflicted father now first seemed to recollect, that the indulgence of his grief could not recal the dead, while his despair had already produced a favourable change

in his own bosom—a more mild and humane feeling—for the acuteness of his own sufferings disposed him now to feel for those of others. He no longer, in his despair, wished for revenge on the author of his woe ; but resigned himself to hopeless sorrow. Trembling, he looked back upon his past life, and sought for some cause of the visitation he had suffered. Deprived of all who bore his name, superstitious terrors were now added to his suffering, as he in vain tried to follow a link of events which connected his fortunes with his faults. He thought of his official duties ; of the severe judgments he had given ; of the victims who had perished in his dungeons ; and of the few innocent beings who had ever been restored to liberty. Then he recollect ed the many wretches who had protested their innocence upon the scaffold ; and fearful doubts, as to whether he had pronounced just judgments, smote upon his soul. Suddenly he called to mind the fate of the poor Jews, who, from the whole evidence, stood clear of the imputed guilt; liable at most to the infliction of a small fine, yet condemned to linger in prison ; and as their images rose to view, he saw also that of the blind and destitute mother,

who had been consigned to the flames by his own father, and how it had harassed that father's mind to the day of his death. "Who knows," groaned the unhappy judge, "but the consequences of that direful act may not now be the retributive vengeance which has fallen upon me and upon my family. Ah! who knows what more terrific measure of woe may be dealt out to me as I approach the limits of my days! what evils may befall me in old age, when thus visited in my prime of years!" Absorbed in these and similar agonizing reflections, he seemed to struggle with the awful consciousness of some dreadful and predestined calamity—some fearful vengeance in store for him; he then suddenly sprung up, manned his soul to the conflict, and, as if fearful of being too late, flew towards the prison where Ben David and his father still lingered.

The gaoler, upon being questioned relative to the condition of the prisoners, merely shrugged his shoulders; and on being urged, proceeded to say: "The old man, I think, is fast approaching his last hour: since yesterday evening he has fallen away fast, and my son-in-law, who last saw him, says, he is

sure he must be about to give up his Jewish soul to the devil, for whom it is only fit?"—The chief judge started; yet he ventured not a word of sympathy before the iron-hearted gaoler; observing, with assumed indifference, "Has the old wretch had no kind of help whatever?"

"To what purpose, please your honour?" returned the man; "such vermin as he stand in no need of a doctor. Satan will take care of his own as long as they are alive; and when they go, he too will provide for them. Horler can do him no good; for the old rogue has been these hundred years upon his journey, and he is quite hard and dry enough to feed a fire. The oldest fuel burns best; so, at least, says the worthy priest Reinholt, who has just before paid him a visit, but all in vain, for the Jewish dog would not confess his sins; and the holy father declares that it is a lost case; for sure enough the demon bit, and plunged, and snorted in him, whenever the priest began to pray."

"Is the son with his dying parent?" inquired the judge.—The gaoler shook his head. "Let him be instantly put into his father's cell," continued the dignitary. The man eyed him with

an incredulous look. "The saints save us!" he exclaimed, as he began to look for his keys, "the accursed beasts will make a howling and gibbering together, enough to deafen us all; besides, it is of no use." The judge repeated his command, and then entered the cell in which the old man was confined. He found him stretched upon a miserable pallet, quite alone; without help or hope, but with death at his side, busied in his final work. His countenance had already assumed those peculiar signs which old Hippocrates designates as the last that are made upon this side of eternity; his breast heaved heavily and painfully—for there was the lingering struggle between life and dissolution—while his limbs hung or wavered helplessly about, his hand in vain seeking to grasp a small phial of water, which stood at the head of his couch, to refresh for a moment his parched and fevered lips. The judge afforded him the help he wanted, supported his head, at the same time speaking gently and kindly in his ear. The refreshment of a few cooling drops, and the mild tone of the speaker, seemed to restore the sufferer to some degree of consciousness; his closed lids began to quiver, and

gradually to unclose; he fixed his eyes at length on the speaker's face, and, in the features of his sternest judge, beheld those of a man at the death-bed of a fellow-creature.

"The Almighty will reward you for this," at length murmured the old man, recognising the but too well remembered features; "the happy time is at length arrived, when our Great Master calls us away, and reconciles us to all;—yea, even to our enemies."

"Yes," replied the judge; "our God will not refuse reconciliation to those that seek it in death. Do you forgive me the injuries I have done you in performing the stern duty of my office? Will you not curse my name?"

"O, God, forbid!" replied Joachim, "that I should curse him who refreshed my spirit with kind words—my burning lips with cool water. No, may he be pleased to remove far from you the suffering due to every one of us—to the faults of thy father or thine own. I can—I do forgive you for Israel's sake. I will offer a prayer for you in the valley of Jehoshapat, if indeed you will consent to grant my two last requests."

"Only speak," replied the judge, "they shall be done."

"Then drive the priest from my bed-side," said the Jew imploringly. "His creed is to me a curse and a reproach; and if no learned Rabbi may be nigh me, nor one of my friends, I will pass through the dark path alone, with the angel that brings me rest." The judge nodded assent, and the old man continued:—"I could desire greatly to see my son, and his poor daughter also, my beloved Esther."

"Of her," replied the functionary, "I have no tidings; but, for thy son, he shall be with thee—he is now coming."

It is necessary to have witnessed the impassioned feelings peculiar to the people of the South, to form an idea of the overwhelming sorrow that wrung David's heart. He strove to free himself from the hands of his conductors, and, ironed as he was, to fling himself by the side of his expiring father. When disengaged from his shackles, he sank down by the couch, clasped the feeble hands of the sufferer, kissed them, hung over the dying man, as if to protect him from all around, pressed his own pale lips to his, and uttered a sigh so heart-rending

and so deep, that it seemed to shake the souls of those who heard it. A flood of tears then came to his relief; and these were followed by loud and piercing lamentations, such as might be expected from the tongues of women, but are seldom heard from those of men. The confusion of this scene, from which the judge, unable to control his emotion, was glad to escape, in order to indulge his secret grief alone, continued for some time. At length, however, the first burst of sorrow subsided into a calm and settled despair, when only sobs and moans were heard from the unhappy pair. Even these soon ceased, as Ben David fixed his tearful eyes upon the ghastly features of his father, and seemed to count the moments he had yet to live. The old man now began to murmur forth a prayer, in which his son joined. When this was over, he sorrowfully addressed a few words to the dying man.—“Raaf, wilt thou give me thy blessing ere thou departest hence, or wilt thou not rather curse my name? From thee I received the breath of life; in return I have devoted thee to death. Alas! it is too true, and well hast thou anticipated our fate. For here thou art dying in Edomitish bonds, and I am

the unhappy cause ; yes, here thou diest an exile, far from the land of Israel and the tents of Jacob."

" Son," replied the old man, mildly, " had you even administered poison unto me I would yet forgive. Now I die with you, and we shall together meet again in the paradise appointed for our lost children, since we are forbidden to leave them the inheritance of this world.\* But thou hast not been a bad son ; and though the Lord hath chosen to smite me with weakness and affliction, yet hath he granted unto me strength and resolution to meet my fate. I do not depart hence, my son, with mourning, but with joy ; since I feel that the holiness of Israel hath triumphed, and our innocence been made manifest. This makes it a joyful departure to me, and I thank thee for it." David gratefully pressed his father's hand to his lips. " We have indeed suffered much," continued the dying father with a still weaker voice, ' but joy is stronger than grief.' My hand is powerless as a child's, and I am not able to lay it upon thy head as a father should ; but I can speak the

\* The Jewish law prohibits a child from inheriting property in every land.

blessing which I pray may guide thee to the paths of eternal life, whither I am going before thee. May fortune pave thy way with gold, and the Lord strengthen thy hands and thy countenance to enable thee to recover thy lost wealth. May the Holy of holies keep thy steps from falling, and make thee ever the companion of the righteous, and thy poor daughter, our beloved Esther, not the less so.—Amen, amen.”

Ben David sighed deeply—the old man felt it, and again essayed to speak. “Promise me, my dear son, when you shall again have found the lost child, that you will preserve her in the good faith and the pure.”

“Alas!” replied David, “how can I promise what I may have no power to perform? I cannot put bonds upon her heart; cannot undo what hath passed, or even, perhaps, what may still exist.”

“But promise me,” proceeded Joachim in a more earnest tone, “that you will not permit her to give herself to that abominable ceremony of baptism, and what they call the new birth; keep thou a keen and steady eye upon her that she forsake and renounce not, before the people, the heritage of faith which we brought

with us from Canaan. Swear!" He the more warmly insisted, as he saw Ben David's hesitation and delay. "Swear, I say, before the angel of death at my feet raises for the last time his hand to summon me away."

Half unconsciously Ben David promised what his father asked ; after which he became perfectly calm, and said, "A blessing be upon this oath, and upon the child ; she is indeed called by the name of the foster-child of Mordecai. And now, my son, bind up my head ; for I feel more and more weak, even in my very bones."

The old Jew's eyes grew dim, his voice failed— "The soul is about to depart," he murmured, under the certainty of his speedy end ; "it trembles at the command of the messenger of doom, who stands before me; and whose flaming eye seems to fill the apartment, from the ceiling to the floor." His mind evidently wandered ; "Take care," he cried, "my David ; take care you do not fall under the sword of the heathen, who is plunging and stabbing like a fiery fencer. Hold fast by me, for that is Samuel, who catches the souls of those who die far away from the Holy Land. Help me, my son ! Give me the Lord's own earth which thou carriest on thy breast ; that

so I may die in possession of my native soil, and the angel Gabriel be ready to receive my soul.”\* Ben David took the packet from his bosom, and placed it under the head of his dying parent, whose looks evidently betokened the mournful pleasure he derived from it. “God is great—he is Lord of all,” he muttered, “Known in Judah, and his name worshipped in Israel. His dwelling is in Zion; let us give praises to the only one true God.” Here the eyes of the dying Jew closed, and they were the last words he spoke; for as he opened his lips the angel of death, from the point of his sword, poured into them the gall-drops that still hung there; his face grew more deadly pale, and, with a long drawn sigh, he expired.† But surely some good angel must have interposed to lighten his last dark hour, for the countenance of the dead still beamed with the rays of joy and peace. Ben David then took the cushion from under the

\* The wealthier Jews are accustomed to have earth brought from Palestine, which they enclose in a small vessel, and bear about them as a sort of charm, and which they also lay under the head of a dying person, to facilitate the passage and reception of the soul into the world of spirits.

† Part of the doctrine of most of the learned rabbins, and certainly not the least poetical.

head of the corpse, upset the water-jug, in which the messenger of destruction had, perhaps, cleansed his sword, tore his robe, and flung himself upon the ground, where he lamented in silence, alternately praying and humbling himself, in his utter affliction, to the dust.

In this situation he was found by the chief judge on the same evening. The deep earnestness of his grief, had moved even the stony bosom of the gaoler, so that he did not venture to remove those beloved remains from the presence of the afflicted son until he should receive commands to do so. Sad and silently Ben David fixed his eyes upon the chief judge, as if he would have looked into his very soul. The wildness of his features relaxed, and they assumed a milder expression, as he detected only a feeling of deep sympathy with his loss, in the countenance of his late persecutor.

"Arise, David," said the judge, "I wish to hold some discourse with you."

"Sir," answered the Jew, "I dare not arise, for such is the law; the earth is the only couch for bitter poverty, and swallows up our true inheritance. Permit me to observe, the

obligation of our law, and deign to speak to me, like a gentle master to his dog."

"Get up, David," repeated the judge, "your law concerns me not, and you may observe it in another place. Rise, and thou shalt be free."

"Free!" exclaimed the Hebrew, astounded at what he heard, "sir, do you speak truly and sincerely? Heavy is the chain, but it will be yet heavier, if after being promised to breathe the free air once more, it should be denied me still."

"I do not deceive thee," replied the judge, "thy freedom is pronounced."

"Freedom!" repeated Ben David, "and can I have quite forgotten how one is made free; to walk in the pure breath of heaven without bonds; to sleep under a free roof, without pain and care! Do I understand you, and hath the council at length acknowledged the truth?"

"It is all discovered," replied the judge, "the villain Zodiah has absconded, and proofs of his murderous deeds have been found in his dwelling. But with regard to what had been already proved against you, the sentence of the council is, that you be banished from this city for the space of six years, and that you be nowhere found within its territory, under pe-

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nalty of losing your ears and your right thumb. Such is the punishment awarded for the crime of having trafficked in Christian flesh. Return thanks, then, for the clemency thus shown you, and hasten your departure this very night."

" My lord judge," replied Ben David, after a long pause, " though I cannot comply with your proposal, you must not let it prevent my freedom. But the ban of exile—it is that which brands me with the name of felon. My house will be razed to the ground; weeds will grow before my door; my friends will seek me and inquire, ' whither hath he betaken himself, that we no more behold him ?' And my daughter, my dear Esther!—O, my lord, I cannot, I know not how to fly."

" In that case you must be compelled to go," replied the judge, in a tone of indifference, " and then woe upon your head, and upon your hand, should you venture to return."

" Oh sir!" groaned the Jew, " you are cruel in your mercy: yet liberty is so great a blessing, that I would willingly go, though destitute as the poorest beggar and naked as the unborn child; for I have no buried treasures, I have not hidden my gold. Willing though I be to launch

forth into the wide world, to close my doors, and commit the keys into my neighbour's hands, and go in search of my lost child—but this—my father's body; alas! I have not strength to bear it away, and what will become of it. Will it rest in the earth in peace, when the Lord hath commanded that the mourner should not close his eyes during the night. Tell me, then, what will be done with it;—will you have it thrown upon the highway, or into the river? Woe, woe to Israel, and to its downfal! My heart is pierced with grief; it seems bursting from my bosom, for my trials are too great."

"Be calm," interrupted the judge, "the brethren of thy faith shall to-morrow morning come and bear hence the dead, and the body shall be interred according to your own customs. I swear it shall be done."

Upon hearing this, Ben David approached the remains of his father, and, bending over them, said, "Raaf, wilt thou be angry with me, if I do not continue here, and bewail thee the livelong day?" I will go forth; I will seek my beloved Esther, the child of thy love, the child which thou garnered as a treasure in thy heart, and fondled in thy arms. I will go a banished

man, and seek out the far land, where thy tents stood, O Jacob, and where the law was expounded unto thy children. There will I learn how to fast, and pray, and to sit upon the ground, and rend my garments. Do not now be angry with me; but I dare not here inter thy remains; I dare not follow them to the grave. Farewell; for ever farewell!" Saying this he bowed his head, then tenderly and reverently pressed the lips and forehead of the deceased, closed his eyes, and bound the Zephil-lum about his temples. After which he threw a napkin over the face, and turned towards the chief judge.—"Now, command me, honoured sir, and I will obey."

"Go hence, then, Ben David, so soon as the shadows of evening shall begin to darken the earth. One of the attendants of the prison will conduct you as far as Sachsenhausen. There may'st thou abide until the morning. But with the first beam of morn shake off the dust from thy feet, and wend thy way far from these towns. I have done enough to express my feelings of compassion for you; enough in having procured your acquittal by the council. Do not compel me to pronounce your future doom, but be wise and observe the law of exile."

“ See, already the twilight begins to lower,” said Ben David, slowly fixing his eyes upon the window, and observing lights in the neighbouring house; “ I am prepared to depart, as it is your will.”

The watch appeared with a torch at the prison-doors, and the judge prepared to leave the place. The Jew advanced a few steps, and then stood as if transfixed to the spot. “ Oh God! I feel as if some hand dragged me back by the hair, and Solomon’s ring were fast bound round me, so that I cannot go forth.”

“ Courage, courage, Jew,” exclaimed the judge; “ lo! freedom hails you! Cease this incessant lamentation. The old man had reached the end of a long career; and, in the course of nature, the father dies before the son. Pity me, for I go to my long home and leave not one of my name behind me!”

Ben David now threw one last lingering look upon the body of his father, and tearing himself away with a deep sigh, followed his attendant. Upon reaching the street, his rude conductor bade the unfortunate Jew walk before him, in order that he might keep his eye upon him. Worn with weakness and confine-

ment, the prisoner's limbs tottered under him, as his merciless guide urged him forwards; and, on arriving at the gates, he gave command to the watch that should the Hebrew be found within the city's confines by next morning, he was to have his nose and ears cut off, and be consigned over to the authorities for the infliction of further penalties.

Ben David was now at liberty to go whithersoever he chose to bend his steps. Though much exhausted, he pursued his way through throngs of people proceeding on business towards Sachsenhausen; and the man, whose destiny had been so long in the mouth of the multitude, now passed by unheeded and unknown. The council, indeed, could have fixed upon no safer plan to escape unpleasant comments, than in immediately despatching the ill-used Jew to a distance from the city. Ben David sought not to participate his griefs with a single human being, and avoided observation as much as possible. With this view, when he found himself unable to proceed further, he withdrew into an unfrequented corner of the street, and sought shelter among the ruins of an ancient chapel, called after our Lady, but which

had been suffered to fall into decay during the last half century. As a Christian temple, it was assuredly not a place to be selected as a dormitory for an unhappy and persecuted Jew. He threw himself upon the ground in this deserted sanctuary—thoughts of his past sufferings crowded fast into his mind—of all his father's wrongs and bitter poverty—his own forlorn and destitute condition—and when he at length closed his eyes, his sleep was haunted by the same images of woe.

Whither should he next bend his steps—where again seek to collect the scattered remnant of his hopes, and learn how to support his joyless fate? Whither, oh! whither had those fierce bad men, of whom Judith had spoken, borne away his gentle and beloved Esther? And should he ever know the pleasure of once more folding her to his bosom? Would she be the same, the pure, affectionate being she once was—the pride and joy of his life? He pictured to himself the lovely and defenceless girl in all the horrors of that fate which his imagination had conjured up. His heart beat heavily in his bosom, and in the extremity of his fears he

cried out, " My father, and my God ! thou who didst create the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is, what inexplicable sins hath this thy mortal servant been guilty of, to bring down such heavy wrath upon his head ? Why lie I here thus persecuted and tortured unto death, and the light of thy countenance for ever eclipsed, as from the fallen angels themselves ? Surely I am more unfortunate, more bitterly tried, than unhappy Job. Time hath been, when I possessed both goods and treasures, when I cherished an aged parent, when I was beloved and caressed by a beautiful child. It was I who sent forth two sons into strange lands, to be the staff of my life, the joy of my old days. Woe upon me ! woe upon me ! whither have those riches flown ? where are those children now ? Terror hath taken up arms against me ; terrors are upon me ; the blasts of adversity have scattered my branches, and uprooted me from the very soil. My hopes are extinct ; the honours of my old age are trampled in the dust ; for the sword hath drunk the blood of one of my boys ; and the other hath fallen from the law of his father and his country's faith. My father hath died

in the prison-bonds of his enemies; and the cries of my daughter have been stifled ere they reached the judgment-seat of the Most High. Yes! where is the blooming rose; the beauty of my garden? Alas! she has fled like a shadow of the evening; the spoiler hath seized upon her and upon my treasures. Henceforth, I must beg my bitter bread from the stranger, and before the tents of Jacob; yea, from the dwellings of Amalek, that instead of alms would award me death, because I am faithful unto thy laws—unto thy will—Most High, ever to be feared and adored—the one true God. Yea, I will still cling unto Israel, the Israel thou hast chosen above all the people of the earth. I clothed myself with righteousness, as with a garment; my integrity was a princely crown upon my head. What sin is it, then, which thou hast discovered in thy servant, to have called down the full vial of thy wrath upon his head? Or is it that thou wilt prove him to the last—that thou wilt try him in the reins and in the heart?"

Here the last murmurs of his trembling lips were lost in silence; for strange forms, like shadows of the night, came flittering round

him, clad in dark robes, and, as they rose from the earth, they seemed to approach the place where he lay. Then they appeared to gather in a throng; and such was the effect of this sudden and alarming apparition, as not only to strike terror to the heart of the mourner, but to produce the same impression upon a casual spectator, who had beheld it from his window, on the opposite side of the place, and who, with the exclamation, "Oh, Jesu Maria!" closed down the window, extinguished the light, and disappeared. But Ben David, little subject to supernatural terrors, soon recovered himself, and saw in those shrouded forms no apparitions of the grave. His reason quickly reminded him of the secret judgments and punishments then exercised in the place, and which were held in greater awe and aversion by the people than by the Jews, who were never brought before the secret tribunal; and he rightly interpreted the strange figures to be the agents or spies of the same terrible tribunal, upon the watch, to entrap any unfortunate wretches who might have sought refuge in the ruins. In spite of his extreme exhaustion, therefore, he attempted to remove from the spot, apprehen-

sive of further ill-usage, when a well-known voice from a little distance, fell upon his ear, and startled him by the words (though spoken in a friendly tone), "Thus far, and no farther: if popular rumour speaketh true, I shall find my people within reach of our Lady's Chapel. Accept my thanks for having accompanied me to this spot; for while I possess so many enemies in this place, I may well stand in some fear of assassination."

"Who knows," replied another voice, "if you may not encounter a similar fate. I would willingly, my good Dagobert, conduct you back with me into the city. Abandon your enterprise, and go into the monastery, or seek adventures in foreign parts, but leave the present dark affair undisturbed."

"Hold your tongue," replied Dagobert; "the air here, indeed, is not so pure, nevertheless you shall not deter me from my purpose. On account of your friendly guidance, however, I will forgive you for having so basely betrayed me; and I am no longer angry."

"You have spoken well, youngster," replied Gerard von Hülshofen; "but you could also have given quite another turn to the affair had

you only taken a little prudent precaution, and accosted the boy as your own brother."

"Right," returned Dagobert, with a sigh, "it is all my own fault. But go now, and may God be with you. It appears as if I stood in an enchanted circle, and that there were no other person who could partake of my lot. Inquire in the morning for me at the Unicorn; and if I am alive, we will take a farewell glass together; for my paternal roof, and my native city, are henceforth forbidden haunts, and I must away. On this occasion you may well wonder at the conduct of your tall Vollbrecht. He boldly insisted on the value of his services, and methinks you seem inclined to follow his example."

"You are yet able to pass a joke," replied Gerard, "and my heart beats like that of any poor sinner. A good conscience may be a very stout harness, but——"

"That it assuredly is," returned Dagobert, "nevertheless, go. Should I never return, remember me to my father, and to the good priest Johannes, and take my horse with you, the most I have to give. Now fare you well."

After one shake of the hand away went the

heedless Gerard. For some minutes Dagobert gazed around him, as if undecided what to do. "At the best, I can but wait here till I get a new guide. What! is it the night-dew which hangs upon my eye-lids, or something else? The poor little fellow had well nigh made a fool of me, but I will think neither of him nor of my father nor of her. In God's name, and in the name of the Holy Trinity, I am resolved!" He drew his mantle closer about him, and turned a keen glance on the side whence he thought he heard something move. With his left hand folded in his cloak across his breast, and grasping his sword in his right, he demanded in a firm voice—"Who goes there?" In place of the expected answer of some dark inquisitor, or secret spy, he recognised the voice of Ben David the Jew. Not a little surprised, he cried out—"Unhappy man! What do you here? Speak! better fly, or they will again incarcerate thy poor bones. The spies are abroad."

"I have not broken my prison," replied the Jew, humbly; "I will yet go further to preserve my life for the sake of my poor child.—Yes, yes, my dear child!—Sir, you have heard—you have protected—you once, perhaps, loved

her; and as a nobleman is forbidden to love a wretched daughter of our tribe——”

“ Ben David,” replied the young man, half angry ; but the Jew would not allow him to proceed, and continued, “ If I have spoken what is not sooth, forgive me, and God will not hold me in fault. Should I, however, have declared the fact, and should Esther have become a plaything for your idle hours—I must, nevertheless, forgive you—for you are a Christian and I am only a despised Jew. Yes, I will forgive you, if you will mercifully direct me where I shall once more behold the light of my days—the staff of my trembling hand ; but what do I say ?” he added, as Dagobert paused from emotion ; “ I am a fool—I am become vile and feeble —this is worse than an old wife’s doting strain. Ought I not to know that the accursed Zodiah bore her forcibly from your protection—that she hath become the victim of the wild bandit ? Woe upon me—woe upon me and upon Israel ! Join with me in my lamentations for Israel and for my child !”

Here the wretched Jew was about to break forth in loud cries, which would have drawn down some fresh evil on his head, had not Dagobert

compassionately interfered, and sought to calm the poor man's agitated feelings. "Stop," he cried, placing his hand upon his mouth, "do you wish to bring down final ruin upon us both. Check your excessive grief; your fears are groundless. Your Esther is safe. With the help of God, I have not deserted her. You will learn to know me better."

"Angel! prince of mercy!" stammered out the bewildered father, imprinting kisses on Dagobert's hands, "say it again. You have thrown a rich blessing along my dark path. You have poured balm into the wounds of all my griefs. Oh, fill up the measure of your goodness—point out the nearest road to my Esther. Fear not that I will tear her away from you, to hurl her down the abyss of my misfortunes! No, she is your property, as the vassal is that of the lord. She is yours, as the lover's own prize—heart and soul—I do not deny that — only I must see and speak with her before I can resume my far and melancholy way in peace."

"Mark me well," exclaimed Dagobert, quickly, and full of emotion. "Early on the morrow shalt thou clasp thy beloved daughter

in thy arms. Not far from Friedberg lies the castle of Dürninger, and in the woods surrounding the baronial mansion, in a secluded nook, is situated the forester's cottage. There wilt thou find Esther, and remember me in kindness, should I never visit that spot again. Now go, old man; for of a surety, this place will not long remain free from intrusion." As he said this, he took his scantily filled purse, and pressing the Jew's hand, was about to depart.

Ben David kissed the hem of his garment. "Lord of my life—source of grace; and could I ever think thee cruel!" After these words he bent his way through the city-gates—freedom and his beloved Esther appeared to beckon him onwards. The angel of peace and joy seemed to lend him wings; he was no longer the same being, but in silent prayer and thanksgiving pursued his solitary way.

Meanwhile Dagobert, with impatient feelings, and thoughts far away with those he had left, fixed his eyes upon the starry firmament. As he gazed, some snatches of an old song, then a universal favourite with the young and ro-

mantic, came across his mind. Chiming in most truly and touchingly with his strange destiny, it seemed to bring back the courage and peace of mind which he had lost. Half aloud he uttered the following stanzas : \*

“ From my own land—  
So far—so far ;  
Hails me from heaven,  
Yon evening star.

“ Beam o'er my path,  
The same glad light ;  
I know thy hour,  
In the loved night.”

As he finished these lines, seeming to acquire fresh vigour, from his quiet thoughts, he fancied he heard something move. He listened, but it had ceased, and he then repeated the next stanzas :

“ I gaze on thee,  
Mild coming star ;  
On thy loved beam,  
So near—so far.

\* This song to the Evening Star really belongs to the middle age, and is admired for its very naïve and pathetic expression.

"How I rejoice  
Thy course to see ;  
Towards thy beloved—  
Not so with me."

"Towards thy beloved," he repeated in a bitter tone, as he held his hands before his swimming eyes. He was now startled by the sound of a friendly voice near him; "Thanks, many thanks, good companion; thy song cheers one's spirit, for it seemed to come from the heart. God's blessing on the noble singer, and on the writer too, wherever he be, whether in joy or in sorrow; though happy should he be to whom the sister arts are as handmaids—to whom sweet poesy and music are the life and light of his path."

Dagobert looked with surprise at the person from whom these words proceeded, and was still more astonished when he saw a curious little dark man, wrapped in a large mantle with a capote upon his head, the folds of which fell about his person. "I must now, however, entreat you to leave this place," continued the stranger, "if you would not wish to see about you the emissaries of the imperial tribunal. I only

stopped to hear you finish your song, before advising you to decamp without delay."

"How now! my friend," replied Dagobert with a spirited air, "if you be, as I suspect, an agent of the Holy Inquisition, do me the favour of conducting me to the place where I am wanted; for in truth it is no such joyous occupation holding watch here over the dead. The hour is late; and there blows no very summer-like air from the Maine."

On these words the stranger was observed to place something in his bosom, and inquired the name of his companion. On hearing it from Dagobert's own lips, the holy emissary seemed not a little startled. "You are too hasty, my young gentleman," he observed with a sort of obeisance; "but we must lose no time, so up and follow me. I am in hopes of being able to take good care of you, and, perhaps, to bring you back again."

"God grant it," replied Dagobert: "lead the way quickly for I follow you."

"First permit me to darken your eyes with this bandage," returned the officer; "we have not far to go; and such besides is the cus-

tom. You must also deliver up your arms, if you bear any."

Dagobert considered for a few moments, and replied, " Why should I not ? my cause stands in need of no weapon, and it would not be of much service against the violence of numbers." He handed his sword to the little man, and permitted his eyes to be bandaged, giving himself to his companion's guidance, by whom he was conducted carefully along.

" Had I been a great count, and head of the council," whispered Dagobert's conductor, " I would have pronounced you free in that quarter ; for a man who can sing such a song, and sing it as you did, can never have borne a speck upon his shield."

" You seem to have some confidence in me, though belonging to the holy council," said Dagobert, " but you may happen to be deceived."

" Not so," replied the other, " I never saw any thing of you before to-day ; but from the moment I heard you sing, and you spoke to me, I well knew who you were ;—both you and your house."

"So be it," returned Dagobert; "nor are you a stranger to me; for many a pair of boots have you polished for me, if my ears do not deceive me."

"Hist there," replied the other "not a word more."

"But how come you, the light-hearted leader of the famous choir," asked Dagobert; "how come you among these owls of the night?"

The little man gave him a squeeze of the hand, and whispered, "Be still, in Heaven's name! we are not far from the tribunal, and have only to await the sign."

They both stood silently; till after a little while, strange noises were heard; and then seven blows of a hammer upon a sounding board, followed by the heavy footsteps of men approaching. All at once, Dagobert found himself hurried forward; he felt that he was walking over a smooth stone pavement; he heard a tumult of voices around him, and the sound came as if from the bottom of a vast vault. The guide now bade him stand still and took off the bandage from his eyes. Dagobert instantly recognised the chapel of the Virgin as the place assigned to the secret tribunal.

Upon the steps intended to receive the altar, stood a wretched table, behind which was seated the president on a stool, with seven of the council on low forms around him. Before the first of these lay a sword and a willow-branch. Behind the judge's seat was ranged, singly or in groups, a number of men whose sharp keen countenances, resembling that of the judge, betokened that they belonged to the same institution, either in quality of emissaries or sheriffs; these, however, were not admitted to take a leading part in its decisions. At a respectable distance from these members stood several attendants in waiting; while two lamps, one of which was placed over the entrance and the other before the lord president, shed a sombre light over the ancient building. The discussion was warmly carried on, until the messenger respectfully approaching the president, made known that the person summoned before the tribunal was then in attendance. A single knock upon the table was the signal for general silence. All eyes were instantly directed, from under their dark cowls, upon the young man, whose firmness seemed to increase as he became more aware of the careless manner in which these much-dreaded

judges transacted their affairs. The president first broke silence: "I ask this, our holy court, whether the time be yet arrived in our tribunal of the most gracious emperor, that I should pronounce a just and holy judgment under the royal ban?"

The court replied, "Since, from your high station, and the gracious power of our emperor, you have received commission to judge and execute righteously, so do thou now pronounce sentence upon the accused, here summoned and here present."

After this, the head of the young man was completely veiled, while the countenances of the president and members, with their entire heads, were at the same moment uncovered. They threw their cloaks off, and their gloves were also laid aside. The president then spoke in the name of the whole assembly; after which the judges were again veiled, and sat down, while the bandage was removed from the eyes of the accused. The first questions having been answered by Dagobert, with perfect readiness and self-possession, a list of numerous accusations was brought against him, upon the evidence of an emissary of the court. The prisoner's heart

beat high, on hearing the enumeration of his alleged crimes, for which he now awaited judgment. His expression of noble scorn was equalled only by the consciousness of his innocence, while both gave him strength and confidence to inveigh, in manly language, against the unjust proceedings which aimed alike at his freedom and his good name. With energetic eloquence, he laid before his unknown judges, the whole tenour of his life; how he had ever honoured and obeyed his parents, and treasured up a good heart and conscience as his noblest trust. That, moreover, he had so conducted himself towards his stepmother, as to convert her former antipathy into maternal affection. He frankly declared how his sister had incessantly persecuted him, notwithstanding his proposals of friendship, and boldly maintained, that Judith's late evidence, combined with the knowledge of Wallrade's violence, must go far in his vindication.

“ I am not one capable of attempting a father's life. I am not one who could betray a sister into disgrace. I had no part in the sale of the boy Johannes: reason itself acquits me of that charge. What enlightened man can be-

lieve any thing further necessary to prove my innocence? Facts are not wanting—all that is required is their admission. Neither facts nor words can be properly brought against me. My path has never hitherto been a crooked one. I have respected my father's gray hairs—nor have in ought wronged him. Is it possible, then, that I could wound him through the heart of his wife—the ornament of his house? Such an action could only be committed by an abandoned infidel; and both as a man and a Christian I abhor it. The last accusation, my lords, is equally groundless. To intrigue with a Jewess, and thus to become a heretic—who can lay it fairly to my charge? 'Tis true, I sheltered the poor unfortunate from the scorn and hatred of the world—I still conceal her from the fury of her enemies, and rejoice in my success. You will in vain seek to discover her retreat. The lamb which I saved I will not again expose to the wolves; and I must convince myself whether some of those wolves, my lords, be not concealed under your robes. Forgive me this! let me be but assured of the contrary, and prove to me that Esther, Ben David's daughter, shall be treated as an honourable

woman, not like a wild beast,—then you shall be informed of her abode. I, however, have committed myself to your power—believe what I say or not, as you think fit. It would not have been difficult for me to disclose many a base action; but retaliation is not my principle. I am German! I act openly and honestly, and desire justice from the emperor, before whom I have boldly cast myself; not before a tribunal that avoids truth, in which detraction lifts up her hydra head, and which is dreaded by the people. I wish to be tried by a jury of Germans, who honour the king's name, and who honour not less those innocent men whom God creates after his own image!"

When the noble-hearted youth had finished, a deep silence prevailed throughout the assembly, and though he had spoken as an accused person, a stranger would have thought that he was about to take possession of the president's chair. The president now rose and said, "God forbid that the innocent should be condemned at this tribunal! Not for this has our sovereign given me authority over life and property. The sword with us points to the crucifix, and can only fall on the wicked. For this were we

gifted with wisdom to discern truth from falsehood, and therefore it was that the first tribunal was named the Mirror of the Kingdom, in which all might truly behold themselves. I do not find you guilty; but leave you to the judgment of the seven freemen whose turn it is now to speak."

While these persons were communicating their decision to the president, Dagobert remarked, that in a corner, half concealed by a pillar, one of the masked men appeared in the deepest despair, and regardless of every thing around him.

"The officers of the Secret Tribunal acquit you," resumed the president, in a solemn tone, "and you may hence perceive, that we pronounce righteous judgment. I therefore thrice summon your accusers."

The man leaning by the pillar, then tottered forward, and the president exclaimed, "We find your complaint ungrounded. Will you swear that you seized the accused on just grounds, or will you further urge the accusation before the chamber of the kingdom at Dortmund?"

The accuser shook his head, and spoke with

a trembling voice ; “ No, my lord president, that shall never happen. I have, to my best ability, fulfilled the duty of a free member. It is the will of Heaven that I should fail in my charge, and I will not swear ; for the prisoner would then be lost ; and it is God’s will he should go free. I have not taken him in the act, and cannot further press the accusation.”

Dagobert stood lost in astonishment, for he recognised the voice of his father in that of the accuser. He could scarcely support himself ; but when the other continued—

“ I therefore submit myself to the penalty, which, according to the rules of this tribunal, is awarded to the accuser ;—to the same fate that would have fallen to the lot of the prisoner.”

Dagobert was no longer able to keep silence, bursting into exclamations of,—“ O, merciful Heaven ; my father !” then turning towards the president ;—“ my poor deceived father ; and to die for my sake ! O, ye lords, permit not the deluded old man, compelled by cruel destiny to appear against his son, to suffer for it !”

The president cautioned him to desist, when the person arose who seemed by his lan-

guage and deportment to be the chief judge,— “ My lord president,” he began, “ this acquittal is remarkable for the easy victory obtained by the eloquence and specious boldness of the accused over the complaint of the accuser, without any proof of innocence. However, your sentence has been pronounced, and is conclusive; but let us use forbearance towards the accuser, who has so long sat among us with honour. He was bound to make the accusation. The whole truth has not yet come to light: let no severe judgment be passed; it is sufficient to declare him incompetent longer to sit here, or any more make an accusation in open court.”

“ Such a disgrace—” cried Diether, “ No! take my head instead of my son’s.”

“ Father! father!” exclaimed Dagobert, with agony; “ Do you desire my life? then, ye lords, take it without delay. If my father hates me thus without a cause, I will readily admit all the accusations brought against me, and die as an infidel and defamer, rather than that a hair of his head should be injured, or his honour sullied.”

“ And can you persecute such a son?” cried

the president, reproachfully ; “ can you still retain your terrible rage against him ? You are, however, more to be pitied than blamed, having been made the victim of circumstances and false friends. I saw well the struggle you would have to undergo in this affair, and I undertook it reluctantly. In order to exercise mercy, I avail myself of the means ; even should the young man have been proved guilty, it never should have been said that, under my presidency, a father had sworn away the life of a son before the judgment-seat ; I therefore acquit the young Dagobert—he is devoted to the church, and is already one of its holy members. We declare the absolution null and void, for John had been already deposed, and read his renunciation in council. Dagobert is consequently not amenable to this tribunal. We leave it to the holy office, and to his bishop to survey his conduct. We have also judged according to the ancient laws of the empire, that the accused should swear to keep secret what he has here witnessed.”

At first Dagobert was about to answer, with some warmth, what the president had said respecting his absolution by the pope, but recol-

lecting that this was the only means of saving himself and his father, he remained silent. He readily took the oath, administered on the drawn sword, and permitted himself to be quietly led out by the beadle.

## CHAPTER III.

"BELIEVE me, my dear young friend," exclaimed Gerard, the next morning, to the elder's son, "believe me, how heartily rejoiced I am to see you again alive, and well—escaped from the clutches of *the savage tribunal*, though with the loss of my noble horse. But you have never yet gratified my curiosity with an account of what took place. Still I am not the less disposed to be on good terms with you, though one cannot help exclaiming when one sees you indulging that strange and moody silence, as you sit there gazing upon vacancy. Why you had once a bloom upon your cheek, and I was growing fat; now you are as white as a sheet, while my waistcoat hangs about me like a slough upon an old snake. Thanks be to the good cheer of his honour. Once the wine

streamed down our throats like rivers ; now you never catch a glimpse of the steak and the wine-cup with which our host of the Unicorn used to welcome you."

Dagobert, half in jest, nodded to his bantering friend, and said—"To it, old bolter, to it. I congratulate you from my heart ; and how delighted I should be, could I follow your example. Who would have believed, that I should ever live to wish myself in your place ? But all—all except one thing, would I give to the winds—only to be the same happy fool as thou art."

"A compliment that might vex me," replied Gerard ; "but I forgive thee, thou art in love ; and may the spies catch me, if thou art not courting the Jew's daughter—that exquisite face, which, during the mummeries at Costnitz, looked out of the window by the side of the ugly old cicatrized phiz of David's descendant. Now is that a sort of love that becomes a bold fellow like thee ? Come, leave sighing and grumbling to a *cavalier servante*, or to the more melodious ballad-singer. Leave it to the hypocritical priests, who, by dint of humility, and doleful discourse, rolling eyes, and simpering lips, work their way into young girls' hearts,

where they throw off their disguise, and boldly play the lord and master. Be quiet, and take comfort—trouble not yourself how the world wags. Besides, you are rid of the cowl, and in my eyes, at least, it is no such crying sin to fall in love with a pretty Jewess. There is many an ill weed that can boast gay colours, and a pleasant fragrance into the bargain.” At length, after many of his best bolts of badinage had been shot, the speaker succeeded in extorting another smile from the moody Dagobert.

“ My very good friend,” he replied, “ you may see that my humour by no means tallies with yours, which verily, like an ill weed, grows apace; and, moreover, you judge me wrongly. It is not love which weighs upon my heart; it is not, therefore, that I sigh; there is more perilous stuff which sticks to it. On the contrary, it is love, and love only, that keeps me up; my grief is deep rooted only in my father’s house.”

“ Pish! leave the silly house to itself, where it stands, not far from St. Mary’s church at Franckfort upon the Maine,” said Gerard, “ and go your own way, where love awaits you. All things in your father’s house are bad, even to

the meat; as I have noted well. Wash your hands of it — shake the dust off your feet; and, with clean hands and light heels, go in pursuit of love; make a pilgrimage through the world together, and if you feel any scruples of conscience, you can get the girl baptized by the way. Then the devil himself will not be able to run away with her."

" You draw a pleasant picture of the future, certainly," replied Dagobert, with a lightened heart, " and who knows but I may follow your advice. The duke of the Austrian Tyrol has again made peace with the emperor; and I do flatter myself that I might chance to find some little spot behind his huge Alps, whereon to raise my hearth-stone, even without a father's help."

" So, then, to the archduke's health!" cried Gerard, emptying his glass, " for he is as strong as a knotted oak, and yet as good as old Rhenish. You know, that instead of the bitterest enemies, we are now become the best of friends. I have removed a mill-stone from the emperor's neck, and he has freed that of the archduke from the hated confederacy at a time of need, and now the disputed points, about Argau, Thurgau, and

Breisgau, are all thrown to the devil. But Sigismund has run away with the great nose of the Tyrol; and Frederick will find himself in the beggarly case of the man with an empty purse, unless he chance to find some friend, such as you, to replenish it for him."

Gerard was now anxious to give a wider scope to Dagobert's new views, as the good host suddenly entered the room.

"What do you think, my good sirs?" he began, in a lively tone, very different to his usual manner:—"a countryman, who supplies my kitchen with the produce of his farm, is now seated below, and is telling how he met, on the road, the villainous Scheminritter, posting towards Hayn to the court of Katzenclabogen, accompanied by only two attendants. 'Know ye me, honest clown?' exclaimed the rider, to the poor fellow, who, terrified out of his wits, had sought refuge in his waggon, 'surely I do,' replied the man, with the deepest humility. 'So, then, if you are going towards Franckfort in the mask, recommend me to the lords of Römer, and invite them, in my name, to Erlebach, for this evening. My good fellow, the wild huntsman, from the Wetterau, celebrates the high

wake to-day; and, spite of my old bones, I shall run the first tilt there.' After muttering these scornful words, he raised his whip and hit the poor boor a blow upon his bare head, that brought him to the ground; upon which the servants threw him into the ditch, with all his goods destroyed and scattered round him. Now say, good sirs, what is your opinion about sending an account of this adventure to the lords of the council, that they may send some help to the Erlebachern, who are threatened this very night by this madman with fire and sword."

"Do just as it best pleaseth you, my good host," said Dagobert, "you will have very little help, even should the robber, in his overweening valour, appear boldly before you in all his terrors. My lords of the council take time to decide; they are all at loggerheads; and I have a shrewd guess, that by the hour their decision reached us, my flaxen-haired sister would be grown gray, and your chapman below have died of sheer hunger; rely not, therefore, upon their coming forward to your aid."

The poor host, on hearing these words, looked very much puzzled, and retired with an ominous shake of the head, while the elder's

son addressed Gerard in a lively and encouraging tone: " Believe me, this intelligence has awakened new life in me. You are right, sighing and grieving only makes cravens of us, without doing us any good. Manly will and deed, on the contrary, give us new strength. I bear my sister no love, God knows;—I will not deny it, but fresh recollection of her disgraceful confinement carries me away, and not less the procrastination of the council, which even no threats will avail in rousing to action. And when the final order comes in the last stage from the good burgomaster's, it will then be too late to act upon it. I am ever anxious to leave these walls which incessantly remind me of my former happiness; they are a monument of my vanished hopes. Let us to horse; we will hasten towards Hayn, and take up our night quarters at Hinterhalt. I will thus make one other trial, and know what it is to meet and vanquish one's enemy; and, God willing, before the next sun hath risen high, Bechtram shall be ours. He will still be meddling in matters with the court, in order that he may dart, like lightning, upon our city, and reach his companions in the evening; he will then as-

suredly lead us a bloody dance, if indeed Erlebach be not his object."

"By the holy mass," cried Gerard, "you have spoken out in the right vein. I have, a long while, had a little account to settle with that same old campaigner. Now, would you credit it, that on a time, when he was captain of the city, instigated, doubtless, by the demon of arrogance and absurdity, he absolutely refused to drink with me at table, just because he had the honour of unloosing the emperor's spurs? Storm and thunder! but the day is come; and I can tax him with each foul wrong to his very beard. Up, therefore, my noble comrade, not a moment's delay. Willingly would I go through a whole noon day's heat, not to lose so fine an opportunity to have a fair blow at the scoundrel, and bring him handcuffed to take his seat in the city stocks."

"This last office be thy care," replied Dagober, in a tone of irony, as he called for Vollbrecht, in order to expedite their departure.

At the name of the groom, his companion frowned. "Were it not," he said, "that we are three against three, I could wish that we might send this fellow back again. The sight of the

rogue somewhat quails my courage, for he carries with him such good looks, that he seems to say, forsooth, poor comrade, I am fallen upon the days of Whitsuntide, whilst thou art always in Lent."

" Let the knave alone," said Dagobert, turning to go out, when, instead of Vollbrecht, to his astonishment, the old citizen, his father, made his appearance. Such was their mutual surprise, that neither could utter a word; but the old man, accustomed to command his feelings, nodded to his son in a friendly manner, and seemed to say, " What need is there of a third person at the present moment ? "

Dagobert understood the sign better than Gerard, and sent him with an order to see after the horses.

As soon as the father and son were alone, the elder, having seated himself, began, " So, you are about to depart, Dagobert." The latter mildly replied in the affirmative. " Is it then so easy to leave your home and your father ? "

Dagobert was silent, as if unwilling to enter upon unpleasant topics. But Diether continued, " Dagobert, you were once an unoffending youth, whose kind heart loved every thing

in the world, even to the meanest insect. This humane feeling is surely not altogether extinct. The base world cannot have so entirely changed you, that you should refuse to listen to the prayer of a father or deny to his supplication the hand of reconciliation."

Dagobert had expected a very different interview. The un hoped-for appeal, and offered hand of his father, overpowered him. Tears stood in his eyes, and he threw himself before the old man, like the returned prodigal. Diether also was so affected, that he could not raise his son, but laid his hand upon his head, while his tears fell upon his brown hair and on his forehead. "O, my son!" exclaimed he, after a long pause, " You know the obstinacy of my nature. You know well that I am sooner roused to anger than to pity; but I feel myself to be entirely changed since yesterday. My folly had reached its height. What a night have I passed! With what pain have I been born anew! How my stern feelings struggled against the remorse, which compelled me to offer my hand to him whom I had injured! How my foot held back from the first step towards expiation! At last heaven conquered,

and my better nature has prevailed. I have thrown off all pride, all false shame, and covered myself with the garment of humility, in which I present myself before my son, and intreat him to forgive me the heavy offence I committed against him—the unworthy suspicions I excited. May he, moreover, return to my widowed and desolate dwelling, cheerful as in his early days, and confident in a father's love!"

"Alas, my father!" answered Dagobert, gently, "What sorrow, and yet what pleasure do I receive from your discourse. How must it afflict me to see my parent a suppliant before me, though I rejoice to know that you now rightly judge my heart and the motives of my actions. It was my last hope, that I might yet be restored to the love of my father. A good God has blessed my prayers, and prevented that from being separated which nature had united. Happy am I, my father, if you again take me to your arms, and will allow me to comfort your latter days."

"Your words are a reproach to me," replied Diether, shaking his son's hand. "Let us speak together as becomes men, without many

words, which only soften us, when we should do all in our power to support each other. We are willing to be reconciled—we are friends—good friends. Is it not true, my son, that we shall cast away, and utterly forget, whatever has irritated our feelings and wounded our hearts?"

"Ay, indeed, father! We shall lose no time to show the world that we are again united, and that we lay aside all rancour against our enemies, and deceitful officious friends."

"So be it, in God's name, father!"

"Now, then," added Diether, "come with me, my first born,—my regenerated son,—and how different will be my return home than when I had to look for my son among strangers!"

"One condition, however,—shall I afterwards have your permission to ride out? I have affairs that brook not delay."

"Willingly; you shall be kept under no restraint. Only rest for a brief interval under my roof, that the spirit of dissension may be wholly banished from our house."

They went arm-in-arm through the streets, in which, as they passed by, all windows and

doors were thrown open. The strife between father and son had become the gossip of the town, and their reconciliation was no less so. *Sincere* friends nodded to them with smiles,—the *pretenders* turned aside ashamed,—and the *justice*, in great wrath, closed the window from which he had by accident witnessed this moving spectacle.

On entering his father's house, Dagobert was met by one, whom he directly recognised as being, under Providence, the cause of this unanimity—it was the worthy Father Johannes, his preceptor.

“ How rejoiced am I,” cried Dagobert, “ that this white robe of peace welcomes me, on my return, and not the black cowl of mine uncle. Venerable father! Heaven, through your presence, sends a blessing.”

“ Man is but a weak vessel as long as his passions rule him,” answered the monk, “ but, when visited by divine grace, powerful and exalted. Of this, behold a living proof!” he added, pointing to Diether, who stood smiling, with his hand on Dagobert's shoulder, as if afraid to lose his newly-recovered son.

“ Oh, my instructor and friend!” cried the

youth ; “but yesterday, so unfortunate—to-day so happy in the affection of a father ;—how can I reward you for this unexpected favour ?”

“ By reconciliation,” answered the monk, pointing to the door, through which, slowly and solemnly, the priest, his uncle, entered. The pompous strut, and assumed dignity—the hypocritical semblance of friendship exhibited by this man, while an indelible trace of *inward* discontent still furrowed his brow ;—these tokens, which did not escape the quick penetration of Dagobert, would certainly have deterred him from the enjoined reconciliation, if the monk, on one side, and his father, on the other, had not led him forward. This unwilling advance, however, was rendered less difficult by the sanctified address of the priest, who, in his deep tone, saluted his nephew with a “ *Pax cum tibi, mi fili !* ” The blow, which, by these words, was inflicted upon poor Priscian’s head, had a pacific influence on Dagobert, who could not help laughing in his sleeve at the recollection of times when he used to enlighten his uncle with regard to such blunders. Thus reflecting on happy days, he gave him his hand. “ Peace be with you,” said he, “ and welcome to Ger-

many! Your journey back must have been laborious, uncle; but better late than never. God grant that you may long enjoy your native air, and that we may continue good friends. Forgive me the offences which I have perhaps committed against you, and I shall cordially excuse you for that friendly visit to the cardinal."

Silently and confused the priest looked down at the hem of his garment; however father Johannes pitied his embarrassment, and drew his attention to a text more agreeable—to the difference between German and Italian manners. The elder's brother fell into intricate discussions, and Dagobert, having first, according to good old custom, said a short prayer before the house-altar, prepared himself for departure.

"Very soon shall I be here again," said he to Diether, who reluctantly agreed to the separation, "and perhaps, father, I may succeed in effecting a purpose that will afford you satisfaction."

"What can afford me more pleasure than thy presence and that of little Hans?" answered the happy parent, gazing around him with emotion. "In these desolate rooms I look in vain for her who used to rule my household,

always an industrious exemplary matron, till the arch-fiend over-reached me. My daughter, too, is gone, and, alas, for ever, since in her I have discovered the serpent! I lament only her fate, so unworthy of her lineage, and which prayers and entreaties could never yet bring to its decision. Then, too, the child of the unfortunate——”

“Hush, hush!” interrupted Dagobert, eagerly—“you said truly that she is a serpent; but *this* child of whom you speak is to her unknown, and precisely for that reason, father, I shall not attempt to clear up the mystery, but only cherish hopes that it will be unravelled at a more propitious hour. However that may turn out, Wallrade’s bondage will remain as an indelible stigma on our family, if we do not forcibly bring it to an end. For this purpose I ride out to-day, and it will soon be proved whether I am to return fortunate or disappointed.”

With these words he bade adieu to his astonished father, but was met as he was going out by little Hans and Florilla.

“God save thee, nurse!” cried he, gaily. “With heaven’s help, the devil has been put to flight, although my black robed uncle still

dwells in the upper story ; pray for me, beautiful convert, that the enemy may never come in my way."

Florilla pointed anxiously to the staircase, and made a sign to the youth to be silent. "I rejoice indeed," said she hastily, but timidly, "that you have recovered your wonted high hopes and spirits ; but however safe the disclosures you made at Costnitz are in my hands, moderate, I pray you, that freedom of speech in the hearing of others ; beware of your uncle's jealousy, of the stern mood of your father, and the prying curiosity of the servants. Henceforward I wish only to be considered as a menial, yet my heart yearns for news of the good and much injured Esther."

Dagobert whispered that Esther was in safety, and would have set out, when the boy clung to him and said, "How brother ? again thou art running away from us, and without a word or kiss at parting for little Hans ? "

"Alas, poor child !" replied Dagobert, lifting him in his arms, "unfortunate boy, canst thou tell me where is the true *Johannes*?"

The boy stared at him and answered, "I

understand thee not, dearest brother; but in earth or in heaven he must be, surely."

"In the earth—in heaven!" repeated Dagobert, gloomily; "poor child, thou has spoken sooth!"

"What can you mean?" asked Florilla, anxiously.

"And thou also understandest me not, pretty one!" answered Dagobert, forcing a tone of levity, "and would to God I did not comprehend my own words, and now, as heretofore, could love this boy as when I knew not—but truly I speak like a fool, and yet, hearst thou, 'twere better that my foolish words should reach no further."

"Have you not already had proof that I can be silent?" replied Florilla, "But do not vex the poor child who looks up at you so kindly; kiss him before you go."

"Willingly," said Dagobert, "there, boy; and when I return, thou shalt have a cake in token of my friendship."

"Aye, indeed!" cried the child exultingly, "a cake, and more than that—thou wilt bring my good dear mother, is it not so?"

"Thy mother—thy good dear mother?" repeated Dagobert, surprised; then added with a mournful sigh, "Yes, boy, for her sake, too, I make this journey. Farewell!"

With a bitter contortion of the lips, he set down the child, and hastened to the gate, where Gerard and Vollbrecht were impatiently awaiting his arrival, for mid-day drew on apace. Gerard swore like a Pagan at his friend's delay, and insisted that they should either be too late for the robber, or be parched to death by the sun's heat, ere they could reach a proper place for ambuscade. As usual, Dagobert found means to quiet his fears, and rouse his courage; promised him verdant, spreading oak trees, under which they would rest—a cold crystal spring to quench his thirst, and at night-fall, if their plan succeeded, or even though it failed, somewhat better than cold water for refreshment. Holding these prophecies for gospel truths, Gerard trotted contentedly, though not silently, after his leader, who, absorbed in his own thoughts, gave but the shortest answers to the cavalier's repeated questions.

At a considerable distance from town, opposite to the Gutleüthaus, they found it expedient

to halt. Here, however, there were neither oak-trees, nor cooling springs, but they availed themselves of the mound of a dry ditch, surmounted by black thorn bushes, pervious to every sunbeam, yet high enough to conceal both horse and rider. Vollbrecht had just then remarked some figures on the winding road at a distance, which appeared to be horsemen coming from the forest. Gerard had resigned himself to his fate, and lay stretched among the broom bushes, sheltered behind his horse. Dagobert, on the other hand, kept watch bravely among the sloe thorns, through which he directed a watchful eye, both on the high road and on the opposite bank of the river. Vollbrecht meanwhile had tied his horse to an alder tree, and concealed by heather and thorns, crept on all fours till he had a clear look out in the direction whence, as he thought, the horsemen were proceeding, hoping thus to bring intelligence, and render himself useful. The farther he advanced in this manner, the more distinctly were the travelling figures developed ; at last he clearly perceived three horsemen, of whom one rode before the others. They moved, however, with extraordinary caution, sometimes stopping

altogether, then advancing at a very slow pace. For a long time Vollbrecht tried in vain to find out the reason of this delay ! at length, however, he observed, approaching them by a cross road, through the fields, a carriage covered with sail cloth—that sort of conveyance which is used by country merchants on their journeys from one town to another—and drawn by a pair of horses. Now as the carriage came along at a snail's pace, the horsemen also rode more slowly—till at last they drew to the road side, and hid themselves behind a tall hedge ; on observing which, Vollbrecht did not in the least doubt that these gentry meditated an attack upon the carriage, and with this news he crept back as fast as possible to his companions. Meanwhile his master, and even Gerard, who was panting with heat, had prepared for an immediate attack on the three horsemen. "It is quite certain," said Dagobert, hearing Vollbrecht's account, "that the men behind the hedge, are the old thief, Bechtram, and his followers. I know this instinctively. But no less is it certain that not to lose the renown of this exploit, we must make haste, for I suspect he is also more than usual on his guard. Yonder at the three beech trees, across the

Maine, I observe armed men, who wear the town uniform, and I would lay ten to one they will try the ford, in order to be sure of their prey; so march on, comrades."

He now galloped forwards, Gerard spurring behind him his enormous clumsy charger, on whose uneasy back he sat steadfast and upright as if he had been a man of iron. Vollbrecht had tied the battle-axe to his wrist, and spurred his pony with such success that he kept close by his master. The robbers had begun their attack before Dagobert's party came up. The proprietor of the carriage, a simple hearted, unsuspecting wool and flax dealer, sat under his cloth awning in a sound sleep, from which, to his great terror, he was roused by the voices of his assailants, then grasped with his right hand at the short sword that hung by his side, while shaking the rein with his left, he tried to force his jaded horses into a gallop. This endeavour was but ill rewarded. A merciless stab brought the foremost horse to the ground, and a violent blow rendered the unfortunate merchant's right arm powerless. The carriage of course stopt. The poor man was dragged out almost fainting with pain, and thrown underneath his convey-

ance like a log of wood. There he uttered the most lamentable moans, which were answered by the laughter of these barbarians, who instantly commenced their work of plunder. The bales and packages, however, seemed either of too little value, or too cumbrous to carry off. With horrible threats, therefore, they had recourse to the merchant—dragged him forth, and raised him up, that they might search his pockets for money, or force him to tell where he had concealed it. At that moment the leading bandit happening to look round, to his no small dismay, beheld three horsemen, but a few yards' distance, advancing at full gallop, and with gestures which unequivocally explained their hostile intentions.

“ Thunder and pestilence !” cried he, “ rouse fellows—cleave the scoundrel’s head and defend yourselves. Courage—for yonder dogs come to attack us.”

By good luck for the merchant, the three horsemen came on like heaven’s judgment, and with the speed of lightning. Forced to protect themselves, and called on for aid by their captain, the two bandits left their intended victim to mount their horses, and the battle began in

right earnest. Dagobert instantly attacked the Knight of Bilbel—and they were busily engaged in a sword contest, while Gerard had, by the mere force and weight of his onset thrown first one and then the other of Bech-tram's attendants from their sorry steeds. He then put an end to Dagobert's contest by a blow with the flat side of his blade on the robber's wrist, that disabled his left arm, from which the reins immediately fell.

"Surrender thyself, hoary-headed villain!" cried he; to which the other replied with oaths and curses, while Dagobert fairly dragged him from his horse. The old robber, in his despair, fought upon the ground, but his strength soon failed him; he sank overpowered, and tears of rage rolled down his gray beard when he found his arms bound, and he stood deprived of his faithful weapon. The city soldiers, too, hastening to the spot, finished what had been so manfully begun, and secured his two adherents.

"Knightly bondage! knightly bondage this!" cried the prisoner, in a reproachful tone, holding up his hands.

"The devil take thy knighthood!" returned Gerard; "I will teach thee, old campaigner,

how to give thyself airs, and reject the hand of a friend. See, here, how you have maltreated this poor wight!" pointing to the chapman: " poor Heins Duke! well I know thee in this pitiable plight. I have bought many a good jacket from thee, and borrowed not a little. All the favour I would now ask thee is to manufacture a fine, smooth, strong rope, such as will fit the neck of this king of thieves, here."

" Treacherous miscreant!" exclaimed Bechtram; and these words would have been followed by a severe retaliation upon his enemy, had not Dagobert taken the precaution to have his prisoner well secured, and prepared with a good escort to see his prize safely conducted into the city. His commands were obeyed by all! Horsemen, squires, and pages, some on foot, and some in vehicles, formed themselves into a sort of procession, and set off in triumph, on the road to Franckfort. On their arrival, the shouts of the people thronging into the streets were heard on all sides; their dreaded enemy was now in their power; and the names of Dagobert and the brave Gerard were the theme of every tongue. The burgomaster, and the chief officers of the council, were speedily

assembled ; while, at the head of the elders of the city, the calumniated son of Diether was brought forward to receive the public thanks before the tribunal. His father warmly embraced him, exclaiming, “ Yea, thou art a true man—a faithful citizen—to rescue even thy enemies from doom.”

“ Enemies, say you father ; surely Wallrade is my sister, unworthy though she be to bear our name. I cannot hate her, and would do more to procure her freedom than throw a ferocious bandit into chains. This man has long been a stumbling-block of offence. His treachery —his contempt of justice—and his last acts of duplicity and perjury—were become a scandal to humanity, and well deserve the fate they have provoked. His adherents in the career of crime emulated his example, in spite of the council’s denunciations and the terrors of the rack, the horrid preparations of which already meet our eyes.”

The sight of these dreadful instruments shook the resolution of the bandits ; their courage forsook them ; and upon the condition of sparing their wretched lives, they made full confession of their numberless offences, and of

all their depredations since the day of the last league. There was no imaginable enormity that did not enter into the list, and when this was read over to the chief himself, the colour forsook his cheeks, and the grey old sinner trembled at the frightful picture of his crimes. Under these circumstances, it was no difficult task for the chief judge to extract from him the confession, that Wallrade and the traveller Schwartz, with some others, were yet retained prisoners in the strong hold of the clan. Induced by hopes of pardon, the old bandit consented to dictate a letter to his wife to the following purport:—

“ *To my beloved Alice von Bilbel, with friendly greeting, &c.*”

“ DEAR LADY WIFE,

“ I send to acquaint you, that I am a captive in the hands of the citizens of Franckfort. Therefore I give command that you permit the prisoners with you to go at liberty, as I find I can have no more dealings with them nor they with me. Do this as you value my love.— Given under my hand and seal. As further pledge of truth, I send you your own ring.”

This order, however, failed of its effect; and

the messenger ran no little risk of losing his life as the reward of his trouble. The violence of the robber's wife, and of his old companions, induced them to oppose the commands of the council. They argued, that if they freed the prisoners, Bechtram's life would not be safe, and they must give up all hope of ransom.

When Dagobert heard this strange resolution, he exclaimed—" Give me the letter and the ring, and I will fetch the captives from the old wolf's den. Should I perish, let a mass be said for my soul, and all will be well. It shall never be said, that not one man was to be found in Franckfort who had the boldness to look the bandits in the face."

After this daring avowal, many expressed their willingness to undertake the exploit; but Dagobert persevered, and the president supported his pretensions, against the objections of his father and friends. The base intentions of the president were well known to Dagobert; but he availed himself of his sinister support, and set out, accompanied by Vollbrecht and a trumpeter, as if he was going to join in a public festival.

" It is my unlucky custom," he murmured

laughingly to himself, “ that I am always beating about like the wandering Jew, and thrusting my hand into the fire for people who would poison me if they could. But what matters it? I am confident in a good cause, and cannot do better than go on. I am reconciled to my father, and perhaps I may gain one kind, approving glance from Esther’s eye.”

The image of his beloved rose in his mind, inciting at the same time both sweet and bitter feelings. But her father, like a threatening apparition, seemed to stand between them, and to him he had betrayed the place of her concealment, so that he was certain of finding him at her side. What would be the result of all this? To suppose that Esther would be his was to hope too much, and to separate from her for ever he could not endure.

The towers of Neufalkenstein soon rose before him. The warder on the walls loudly blew his horn, when the trumpeter announced the arrival of a visiter. A tumultuous sound of footsteps hurrying along the ramparts was heard, and a voice through the gate addressed the horsemen—“ I have a message to deliver to the lady of Bilbel from the free city of Franckfort.”

"Lady Alice is ill," was the reply.

"It matters not; I have but to deliver a letter, and address her for a moment."

No answer was returned, and he waited for a considerable time in vain. A number of persons assembled on the walls, and among them appeared a lady covered with a long veil, who looked upon Dagobert and his companions with a wild and distracted countenance.

"If the sun do not dazzle me," said Vollbrecht, "that figure is your sister, sir. She wears the dress in which she eloped from Franckfort, and when you sent me in pursuit of her."

"She lives, then," exclaimed Dagobert, "I shall be able to reward her treachery against me with good."

As he said this the draw-bridge was let down, and the portal opened. Vollbrecht was about to follow his master, but the latter prevented him; "Remain here with this man," said he; "should I not return, report it at Franckfort, and do the same at the forest hut at Dürnengen. Fare thee well!"

Calmly, but haughtily, he rode over the bridge and through the gates. Mixing with the throng of armed men who surrounded him,

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he cried out, "I am a herald, and if you injure a hair of my head, fire will speedily level these walls, and you will meet a deserved death." As he threw himself from his horse, he remarked how useless his threats had been, for he was surrounded by pale-looking people, who, instead of manifesting any insolence in their demeanour, had a restless and uneasy air, similar to that of felons on their way to execution. At the door of the inner court he met the lady Alice, or dame Else, as she was more familiarly called, whose eyes were red, and who seemed scarcely able to support herself, when Dagobert delivered to her the letter and the well-known ring.

Her knees trembled, and her lips quivered. "It is then but too true," said she to old Doring. "To this moment I believed it not. My old champion in the hands of the Franckforters ! Speak, Doring, what ought I to do ?"

"Do what he commands you," replied the hoary ruffian, his eyes full of tears. "Set the prisoners at liberty, that your lord may live and regain his freedom. Delay not."

"Be it so," answered the dame, and taking her keys, she sought for that which belonged

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to the tower ; but for some time her agitation prevented her from finding it.

“ Is it not true,” she began, in a low, mournful tone, as Doring took his departure with the key, “ is it not true that I shall save Bechtram’s life, since I have done what you and he desired—you may promise me that ? ”

“ How can I do it, good lady,” replied Dagobert, who could not witness unmoved the emotion of Dame Else ? “ Our Lords of Franckfort must pronounce upon that ; but I think they will be lenient.”

At this moment Wallrade appeared, and embraced Dagobert, as if he had been the greatest friend. “ Welcome, brother ! ” said she, in a hypocritical tone, “ Welcome, as the herald of freedom. I have counted upon you—trusted that you would avenge me. The husband of that shameless woman (pointing to Else) is, I understand, taken, and his death will be our deliverance. Thank heaven ! ”

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed the haughty matron, excited by this malicious speech, “ if I thought he must die, notwithstanding your deliverance, I would have you put to death upon the spot, and strike off your brother’s head.”

Here the traveller, Conrade Schwartz, with several peasants, who had been confined in the dungeons, gathered tremblingly around the fearless Dagobert; for they well knew of what Else was capable when roused to anger. Wallrade hung fearfully upon his arm. He, however, freed himself from her grasp, and said to the old lady:—"If you seek to frustrate my mission, expect the most terrible consequences."

"What worse could happen to me than the loss of Bechtram?" she asked, in a gloomy tone. "We have so long known each other; upwards of thirty years have we shared weal and woe, honour and disgrace hand in hand. It would drive me to distraction were he to go before me, and die the death of a felon—and yet, once more, did I only know that such would be his doom, neither this vile woman nor her brother should long wear their heads."

"Let us hasten away, brother," cried Wallrade, eagerly. "Oh, let us go. Heed not what that woman says."

"All in good time, sister," replied Dagobert, coldly, "I must first learn if any other prisoner be yet confined in this castle."

Else shook her head, at the same time looking down.

"There is none—none," interrupted Wallrade;—"come, let us go."

Meanwhile a young page whispered in Dagobert's ear, that there was yet one prisoner, a woman, confined in the castle. The noble youth inquired into the affair. Wallrade, full of impatience and anger, joined Else in denying that such was the fact; when Dagobert, bringing forward the informer, after assurances of protection, declared what he had heard.

"Traitor! villain!" burst from the lips of Else and Wallrade at the same moment—"it is false."

"To what end is all this deceit?" exclaimed Dagobert, in a commanding tone. "Dare you think of trying to impose upon me, and upon the lords and elders of our city? Tremble! you had better court their mercy. Tremble, I say, for not a stone's throw hence lies ambushed a body of armed men. Do you think I should put myself into your power without protection? Bring forth the person instantly who is concealed, or it will be quickly over with you."

"Would that the Hornberger and the wolf of

Eppenstein were here, they would soon tame your pride," growled Henne.

"To wit — the heroes who last night burnt Erlebach, and plundered like savages;" said Dagobert scoffingly, "those wretches will not escape the gallows. But you will rescue your chief, if you submit quietly, and let the prisoners depart without interruption."

Else was still undecided, when the Leuenberger stepped quickly from the crowd, with his usual insolence.

"Be not so bold. You shield yourself under your office; but you have no right to lord it here. The captive which you must leave behind, is my sister—your father's wife—whom he has so scandalously driven from her home, though nobly born. She has sought my protection, and by storm and thunder, I will protect her! Enough that you take your own sister with you. She is a wench who can tame the boldest spirit. Her wiles nearly lost me my life. Away with her, but Margaret shall remain with me."

"Lady Margaret here, and in prison?" inquired Dagobert; "then, if your lives be dear to you, let her come forth."

“The lady shall not leave this place,” said Else, proudly. “The brother has a right to control his sister.”

“The husband has a greater power over his wife. Let her come forth; she belongs to a citizen of Franckfort.”

“The devil take Franckfort, its citizens, and all such brittle stuff as Wallrade,” answered the Leuenberger. “Anger me not, nephew. My poor cousin has already fallen a prey to her accursed devices. My sister shall not be your victim. It is but for your own purposes that you desire her to return.”

“Infernal hound!” thundered Dagobert, as he seized his sword. The whole throng were thrown into the utmost confusion; Veit unsheathed his weapon, and Else cried out “Murder! death! Bear witness that the herald violates his faith. Close the doors—up with the draw-bridge!” Veit joined his voice with hers, and they dispatched their assistants to execute their commands. But the gallant Dagobert had already gained the court-yard, and sprung upon his steed, surrounded by the banditti, one of whom sought to drag him to the earth; while the poor prisoners, unarmed as

they were, clung to him in hopes of effecting their escape. Suddenly, the weapon raised to strike Dagobert, was struck from the grasp of the assassin, and in the same breath, a voice exclaimed, "Villain ! forbear to commit murder; and you, dame Else, consult the safety of your lord, who stands on the brink of a precipice. Think better of it," he continued, as he brought forward into the circle a lady in mourning, apparently overwhelmed with grief; "seek peace, and by your decision put an end to this wretched scene, the violence of which can only bring destruction upon yourselves."

"Count von Montfort," cried Dagobert, with a stern look, "how came Lady Margaret under your protection ? I know you have shown too strong an attachment to the women of our house, if Bechtram spoke true as to your being the author of my sister's abduction."

"He spoke true," said Wallrade, maliciously; "this unworthy knight ordered that abduction, and came to amuse himself with my affliction, and to tempt me with his unholy proposals."

"The latter part of what you say," replied

Montfort, "is false, but the former I deny not, though I repent that, impelled by passion, and the desire of revenge, I leagued with Bechtram, whose infamous profession I only first learnt when I entered his dwelling. I repaid his services with gold, and I owe you, my good sword, many an honourable stripe, to wipe off this stain from my shield. But now decide quickly on the destiny of these persons, and take them with you."

Dagobert replied not, but appealed by his looks to Margaret, who stood before him a patient sufferer, with glowing cheek and heaving bosom.

"I will take care," said Veit, "that my sister be not taken from me. It is her own wish to stay."

"How, noble lady!" inquired Dagobert, "is this true?"

"The desire to do right," answered the wife of Diether, "induced me to leave my husband's house, and seek refuge with these people.—I should fear to return to my lord, and before I would yield myself to the undeserved reproach ——"

"Would you rather join a set of highwaymen?" asked Dagobert. "You did not speak

like yourelf, and to banish so base a thought I swear to you that in returning home you will meet with an affectionate welcome."

"Then — yes," murmured Margaret, surprised and doubtful.

"Why, what is this?" interrupted Veit, in an angry tone; "blood and zounds! a citizen of Leuenberg to go back covered with sackcloth and ashes to her oppressors! Death to the villain, should he only touch thy finger-ends, weak-minded Margaret!"

"He, of Leuenberg, is right," sharply replied the wife of Bilbel, "and I am here mistress of Neufalkenstein, and respect the herald of Franckfort; but as to the rude guest, who presumes to dictate to me, I leave him to his fate. Close the gates and up with the drawbridge, I say, once more." Her attendants hastened to fulfil her command. Montfort, however, sprang between Veit, who attempted to force Margaret to remain, and Dagobert, who, raging like a lion, was about to dart upon the whole crew.

"Woman!" he cried, to the angry Else, who was threatening to take deadly vengeance on the informer, "Woman! thou wilt thyself condemn thy husband to the scaffold."

At this moment was heard a sound of trumpets before the castle, which was answered by a number of horns in the distance. These warlike sounds, unexpected even by Dagobert, startled the garrison as a voice of judgment.

" You will bring destruction upon us all," thundered Doring, to the alarmed Leuenberger; " the rogue has not lied in this. His companions are without, and we are lost. Let the woman whom he demands depart, and save your skins."

Veit then ordered Montfort to resign Margaret to her son Dagobert, and dame Else ceased to repeat her commands. The prisoners came forth, and Wallrade had the mortification of witnessing Dagobert place Margaret on his horse, which he led by the bridle, without deigning to cast a glance, or addressing a word to his hypocritical sister. Bechtram's wife sank fainting at the open gates, overpowered with passion and anxiety, gazing upon the departing strangers, and imploring mercy for her husband. The Leuenberger flew into the court, storming like a fiend. The attendants looked wildly round them, cursing, in low tones, the retiring train; and, when they were at a little distance, flinging after them showers of stones, which fell short of their objects.

"We shall meet again," were the last words of Montfort to Dagobert, "and then I shall be able to talk with you."

Wallrade cast upon him a withering look, and accompanied Dagobert, with humble mien, at a little distance.

Vollbrecht and the city trumpeter met the party, and rejoiced to find his master uninjured.

"Of a truth," began the attendant, "we grew anxious for your safety, and when the bridge was raised, we believed that you were entrapped, and hastened forwards. But we had scarcely reached you clump of firs, when we saw a troop of armed men hastening towards the castle." The trumpeter now blew a signal, and was answered by that of the newly arrived. A trooper came forward, his lance glancing in the sun, and said, 'You are Franckforters, I perceive, and if I mistake not, my former worthy master is your leader.' The soldiers hastened up, when the captain sprang from his steed, and embraced his friend. 'Thank heaven,' he cried, 'that your father's anxiety was groundless, and that we find you safe and well. It hurts me much, since I gave up this adventure to you, that I have nothing to risk

for your sake. The ruffians should have felt the weight of my hand.' " He then turned to Wallrade, and offered her, courteously enough for a German trooper, his own horse and escort. She rejected the invitation with a malignant glance at her brother. Dagobert then bade his attendant offer her his pad, and place her on the saddle. Meanwhile Wallrade said in a spiteful tone, " Your unkind deportment was a riddle to me. This noble cavalier has solved it. Your father has assuredly made peace with you, and in your arrogance you condemn the vanquished to go on foot by the horse of your beloved stepmother. Is it not true, thou piece of still water?"

" I shall only answer thee," replied Dagobert, " to advise thee to put a bit upon that calumnious tongue, poor unhappy wretch! Rudiger died in these arms; he, confessed to me thy crime. Let me only see one attempt to disturb the peace of my father's family, and I will no longer spare thee; false wife, and unnatural mother as thou art!"

Wallrade grew pale at these words; while Dagobert, without awaiting any reply, entrusted her to Gerard's guidance; and again turned to

Margaret, who easily saw the traces of anger in his countenance.

" You have had some new quarrel with Wallrade, I fear ? " she inquired. " Oh ! you need give yourself no uneasiness about her ! But God help me ! for in the few days that I passed at Neufalkenstein, she very nearly deprived me of life ; and what will become of me, when I am again in Diether's house, from which I shrink as from— ”

" My father," interrupted Dagobert, " is reconciled to us ; the evil spirit hath departed out of Saul."

" You are all confidence," replied Margaret ; " guileless as a young child, giving and receiving in perfect truth and trust. You are noble and pure minded, without falsehood, and with a good conscience. It is not so with me, therefore do I fear my husband, and to pass the threshold of his house."

" Oh, my mother," exclaimed Dagobert, " how unhappy have you become by a single step from the path of truth. Do not confess, however, to me, for I already know all ; and as your son, I preserve a respectful silence in your presence. But though you are not bound to

inform me, the confession is due to my father. Let him not hear the affair by accident; confide in his love for you, a love triumphant over all his suspicions, over all the calumny and treachery that sought to fix their fangs upon your good name."

"Yes; I see you know all!" exclaimed Margaret, wringing her hands, "and have you so long kept silence? O what an accident has discovered it! Why did I conceal it from you? had I only confided all,—had I only——"

"It would have been useless," interrupted Dagobert; "I should not have appeared. It was my duty to hear all I could—to do all I could for the benefit of a father's innocent wife—a mother."

Margaret changed colour; and Dagobert, affecting to take no notice, attempted to put an end to the conversation in a cheerful and jesting tone. "It is all for the best, mother," he continued; "I would not wish to annoy you, but to strengthen your best resolves. Nor have I sought to effect this in vain; and, therefore, it is that I am wholly devoted to your interest, so long as you wish to be guided only by what is just and right. Should then, my father be

roused to anger, and perhaps be impelled to accuse the innocent; — take it, I beseech you, patiently, as we all ought to do for our faults; — and trust to me that the consequences will not be either too severe or dangerous in any way. I am prepared to meet the council; I have already tamed Wallrade's spirit, and the freebooter, her companion, is now taken in his own trap. Henceforth, I may appeal safely to a father's heart. It is nobly done, to raise a monument to reconciliation and peace; and that I will do, or — but I see the shadows are growing longer, twilight falls, and our steeds are well nigh wearied. We will here take up our residence for the night, and early in the morning resume our way towards the city, where the conquerors will appear with a good grace."

Margaret had, indeed, no anxiety to hasten her arrival into Diether's house; Gerard had not the least objection to refreshment and repose; while Wallrade's evil conscience had made her ill at ease either with others or herself. The rest of the party, on foot, were still more rejoiced at an opportunity of gaining some repose, after their weary way. Dagobert or-

dered the house to be surrounded by a guard of the soldiers, having first accommodated Margaret with the best apartment, and separated from that of Wallrade, at whose door he took his station for the night, in order to debar the artful woman from all chance of setting out before the rest, and seeking to influence his father during his absence. Vollbrecht, however, reached the city of Franckfort on the same evening, in order to report the favourable result of their expedition, without delay.

## CHAPTER IV.

IN one of the most retired and solitary districts—the forest surrounding the knightly mansion of Dürnengen, many miles in extent—stood the forester's cottage, a little structure, at once solid and decorated, built upon a beautiful patch of ground, and surrounded by an infinite variety of trees and flowering shrubs. So deeply was it embosomed, that it could boast of only one entrance, and this not very easy to discover through the labyrinth of a wide and leafy wood. A stranger could only find it by accident, or by catching the sound of a bell, rung towards noon, in order to call the wild inmates of the forest to their daily fare.

The last Lord of Dürnengen had fallen a victim to the famed marauder of his woods, in the very act of counting the heads of his fine

fat deer, as he stood before his cottage door; the bolt entered his heart, and he died on the spot. His widow had never since been able to bear the sight of a place where her beloved lord had met his fate. But it was not so with Regina, the lovely daughter; she had been too young to be deeply conscious of a father's loss, and was in the habit of tracking the forest's mazes, and of even seating herself near the spot—for it seemed to her as if the flowers grew most fragrant, and the birds sang sweetest in its vicinity—on a gentle declivity beautifully surrounded with all most inviting to a young and imaginative soul. Early in the morning would she venture forth to gather the may-flowers, and wreath garlands for the village maidens, or visit the dwellings of the poor cottagers, relieving their wants, and teaching their children by precept and example the way of life. Often might she be seen returning in the evening, culling the herbs and simples whose virtues she had learnt to administer to the sick and the aged, whose lips were ever filled with blessings upon her name. At other times she no longer appeared the same being; no longer the pensive and solitary enthusiast; the cherisher of

the poor; the teacher of the young; when joining in all the sports peculiar to her years. Then you might find her caressing the playful fawn; bounding over the fields with the faithful dogs; and even chatting with the old starling that belonged to the cottage, and had learnt a language which made the old woods echo with mirth. Then she would sit for hours listening to the old wives' tales, the strange adventures of the forester's lives, and wild legends of other days, till the cool evening airs and the rosy streaks of the setting sun, in the west, reminded her of her home. She would then bound away with the fleetness of the deer that often crossed her path, so that the old shepherd who used to accompany her back to the mansion, could with difficulty keep her in sight. Her mother knew well the fondness of her child for these rural excursions; and she could not find in her heart to forbid them, as long as she felt they were safe. Since the period when old Ammon occupied the forest-dwelling, the walks had been free from danger; he had taken active measures to keep the free-booters at a distance, and when accident brought them near, they were ever eager to keep without

the circle of his domain. They speedily crossed themselves and retired; and the villagers stoutly maintained that the old keeper had either entered into some bond with the lawless gang, or that he possessed some secret charm. For he had come a stranger among them, and his destiny had been a wild and chequered one. He had visited distant lands; he had trod the ground hallowed by our Redeemer's feet; he had served in the holy cause of God and his country. In Palestine he met with a thousand adventures and hair-breadth escapes, till he at length was reduced to find his way, a poor pilgrim, to the sea-shore, and trust to the compassion of the master of a vessel, for the hope of again seeing his beloved home. A storm arose, and he was wrecked upon the Greek shores, when a Mahometan pirate made capture of every soul. Again was poor Ammon consigned to the yoke of the infidel, till after several years he became a useless slave, borne down by severe treatment; and, when on the point of despair, was recaptured almost by a miracle, and at length landed near his native home. There he found himself a stranger, unknown to all, in the costume and character of the pagan

whose customs and language he was far more conversant with than his own. He was, therefore, driven from the spot as some desperate vagrant, and sought the place of his birth—an aged and way-worn traveller with dark sunken cheeks, and gray with toil and care.

The lord of Dürningen took compassion on his fate, and placed him as his forest ranger, and keeper of his game. He had scarcely, however, got an assistant into his house, and taken an account of the number of the deer, when his hour was come. Ammon swore an irreconcileable enmity to the freebooter and his gang, and he kept his word. He stole upon the bandit's retreat, silent as death, and ere the villains were aware of his approach, they were already doomed. With a huge blunderbuss, filled with deadly slugs, he took his secret station, and never once missed his aim. The freebooters took alarm at the strange manner in which they dropt off one by one, in spite of every attempt to discover their destroyer. Superstition, added to their terror, and the same feeling soon spread abroad among the peasantry. Ammon never went to church; was never found upon his knees, and ever bore himself so firm and

fiercely, that all agreed he held his commission from no earthly power.

Nor did this belief seem so ill-founded, for Ammon was known to track the forests and the moors at the dead of night, and to hunt the otters, of whose fat he prepared strange mixtures, conducting the process with his doors wide open, in the still and witching hour of night. Some fool-hardy wretches, indeed, once dared to beset his dwelling, to witness his orgies, and, if possible, to plunder and destroy him ; but they rushed on their own fate, and fell into his wolf-traps upon long sharp stakes, where they became an easy prey ; and Ammon hung their bodies, by way of example, upon the fir-trees that skirted the entrance into the wood.

It was thus that Ammon's reputation suffered, except in the opinion of Regina, who had contrived to obtain the secret of the old man's history, and to win his good opinion by listening to his wonderful adventures ; while in return she defended him from the calumnious tongues which sought to bring him into disgrace with her mother, and to have him forcibly banished from the place. It was certain, they maintained, that he never went to mass, and shunned the social

circle, and every kind of duty not connected with his dominion over the beasts of the field.

One morning, as the young Regina was seated, as usual, in her favourite bower, busily engaged in weaving garlands of meadow flowers, for the next village festival, she heard the sound of mens' voices, among the adjacent trees. They were calling to each other as if they had missed their way, and Regina directly said to Ammon, who was industriously mending one of his hunting nets, close by, "Pray go, Ammon, and show the people into the right path."

"Eh! what!" murmured the old man, "if they have had the wit to find their way here, they have surely enough to see their road back again. But if they can get near enough, it will then be time to show them the way out."

These words were accompanied by a significant look, that boded no good reception for his casual guests. Regina however reproached him; and forbid in her presence any uncourteous treatment, should the misguided travellers apply to them. Hardly had she spoke, when the figure of a man was seen at the entrance of the place where they stood. He was followed by a lady, and another man, leading some horses

through the wood. Alas ! how suddenly did Regina's recollection lead her back to the last Easter-eve which she had spent at Franckfort. It was he, the same young man, who now so modestly drew nigh to inquire his way ; and who once had been her playfellow, and named her his queen—the first who had ever shown himself her champion—the admirer—the adorer of her charms. The idea of that evening now made her heart throb with pleasure and surprise. He had shown himself so worthy, and so daring in defending a good cause ; and how often had his image risen to her view, arrayed in all the beauty and splendour of Love's first dream. How often had she sighed to see him once more—to see him soon, gay and happy as in childhood ;—not as she now saw him, the handsome and accomplished man. Her wish was at this moment fulfilled, and with the guilelessness of a child she hastened to welcome him, to take him by the hand, and to beg him “to allow her to conduct him to her mother, who would be rejoiced to see him.”

Dagobert, quite surprised at this reception, not to have been dreamed of in such a place, threw an inquiring glance around him, and

thus spoke:—"Noble lady, it would seem as if heaven had brought me into this quiet and secluded forest to receive your commands; for you are surely the peerless mistress of these domains. Would you deign to grant your protection, you could confer a greater obligation upon me, than I shall ever know how to repay. We have since yesternight been pursued by fierce and murderous men, who have a design upon this poor girl's life; and the unhappy creature has no roof wherein to lay her head, while, in a few days, imperious duties will compel me to leave her. Would you only consent, most gracious lady, to afford her an asylum in these shady abodes, till I return, I shall ever feel grateful; for though she be not yet of our Christian faith, she will shortly be so, and that old man would perhaps permit her to remain in his abode with your consent, noble lady. Can you refuse my request?"

Regina felt only a wish to be useful to the handsome looking youth, and it also flattered her vanity to be complimented as the mistress of the place. Her eye rested long and anxiously on the features of Esther; and the lovelier she thought them, the less she felt inclined to do

her any favour. Her gracious reception seemed wholly confined to the noble youth. She assumed, therefore, a more measured and commanding mien, and looked at Ammon, in whose expression she was surprised to see only a good natured welcome, and willingness to comply with Dagobert's request.

"May I beg you," said Dagobert, "to pronounce our fate," as he with the most courteous air led Esther towards the lady. "You see," he continued, "this delicate and deserted creature; will you not save her? Uncouth as seems her attire, she is yet a jewel whose brightness may well be compared with any in these your fair and quiet domains;—excepting the unrivalled beauty of their young queen!"

Regina could not refuse to smile at this agreeable flattery, and her natural loveliness, and good humour, soon threw off the assumed air of pride. Esther, conscious of what was passing in the lady's mind, was silently resigned to her fate. Her eyes were bent upon the ground, while Regina, still doubting and delaying, attempted to express her opinion in broken and unconnected words. She had an extreme repugnance, she at length began, to

keep any thing secret from her mother, though she admitted there would be nothing easier than in the present case, inasmuch as the Lady Dürningen was never in the habit of frequenting the spot. There was another point on which she was still more uneasy; namely, the circumstance of the young person being a Jewess, whom it might be a crime to conceal, even if Ammon were willing to admit a fair infidel within his dwelling. All this, however, was satisfactorily answered by Dagobert, who explained that it was Esther's ardent desire to enter the pale of the Christian church as soon as possible, while Ammon testified his readiness to do his part in receiving her.

"It is all the same to me," he observed, "whether the poor girl be a Turk, a Heathen, or a Jewess, if you have no objection, my lady. God is the father of us all—baptised or not baptised! The same sun shines upon us all! The harvest ripens for the Heathen as well as for the Christian, and the hail-storm destroys the fruits of both with equal power! Only grant your permission, my lady, and the thing is done."

Again Regina cast a gracious look upon the

handsome stranger, and she could not deny that in her whole appearance—her bright pure eyes and meek features—she seemed to embody one of the most beautiful pictures of the Madonna that ever the divinest pencil wrought. When at length Esther raised those appealing eyes, in whose surpassing charm the truth and purity of her soul seemed to glow—and then essayed to open her delicate and red-ripe lips in soft and flattering words, the triumph was complete!

“Oh! refuse me not,” she said, “noble lady, and the Father of Mercies will reward you. The blessings, too, of my earthly father and of my brave deliverer, will rest upon your head!”

To have rejected an appeal like this, the heart of the fair Regina must have been made of sterner materials than youthful womanhood and enthusiasm; and she smiled her assent.

We now behold Esther under the protection of old Ammon and Regina in the forest-hut: the heart of the aged hunter was renewed within him at the sight of her youth and loveliness; for he, too, in his earlier years had loved, and his whole delight was to talk of the days of old.

He had become attached to a Moorish maiden, and he seemed to trace her features once more in those of Esther, as he had beheld them four-and-twenty years before. She had died just at the period when her lover had wrung a reluctant consent from her father to make her his own. Alas! instead of their bridal day, he now kept the mournful anniversary of her death—for his Kida's image was stamped indelibly upon his soul. But in the person of Esther she seemed again to rise before his view, like a guardian angel—the pride—the solace of his joyless heart!

Willingly, therefore, had he resigned to her the best accommodations of his rural home; and added to its means of defence, in order to protect this loveliest flower of the forest from the spoiler's hand. He became proud of the chivalric office of her champion and her true old knight—obeying her least wishes, and striving to gratify her by all the little attentions in his power. He was ceaseless in his admiration and his praise, when Regina called to enquire about her, and took it much to heart that his young mistress refused to become better acquainted, and received the grateful

acknowledgments of Esther with a cold air. More than all, he regretted to see that she gave up her accustomed walks and visits to him, and no longer required his attendance. Ammon was not aware that her aversion arose neither from Esther's humble situation, nor from her being a Jewess; but simply from her acquaintance with the handsome Dagobert. He remarked not how often Regina appeared lost in thought—that she would sit for hours together gazing in the direction whence the youth was again expected—as if he were to come and remove the stranger and then to return alone, and so to continue his visits until he should remain altogether.

Instead of Dagobert, however, Ben David one day made his appearance—worn and pale, and in so deplorable a state, as to excite the utmost compassion. On seeing him, Ammon had already grasped his whip, as if prepared to drive the intruding mendicant from the vicinity; but an anxious cry from Esther in a moment disarmed him. On learning who he was, the old man's recollections were instantly fixed on earlier days: he thought of the father of his Kida, and on the affection borne

him by his own beloved. He could not, therefore, refuse to admit Ben David to share the dwelling of his daughter. The joy of both was inexpressible, and seemed to touch old Ammon's heart. They indulged their feelings undisturbed; for Regina was confined by indisposition to her mother's house; but the next day Ben David began to enquire into the progress of her attachment for Dagobert, when the maiden's cheeks were instantly suffused with blushes. She had no reason, however, to disguise any thing from her father; and she spoke with perfect candour and truth. To that father's penetrating eye, however, there still seemed as if something more hung upon her mind—some source of uneasy feelings on which she was afraid to touch. He took her hand—

"My dearest child," he said, "you are silent—you hesitate; and this is strange in you. Fear no sort of reproach from me. The past is forgotten. Dagobert shielded your life, and was as a father to you, while I languished in prison. He has supported and rescued you from a thousand dangers. God will assuredly reward him tenfold—yea, open

unto him the gates of paradise, for he hath done good unto the children of Israel. He hath done this for the glory of the Highest; for truth and goodness' sake, not for his own ends; he hath respected the chiefest jewel of a woman's love. Peace be unto him and his—honoured be his memory when he shall join the abodes of the blessed; but for Zodiah, and his vile apostacy, may God's wrath rest upon it, and the fires of Gehenna upon himself. But thou, my dearest Esther, inasmuch as thou art bound to hate the vile renegade, so much hast thou been taught to love the strange man who hath wrought with us, as if he had sprung from the loins of Jacob, and not from Mount Seir. Confess it to me, then, my child!"

"Father," replied the maiden in a hesitating manner, "nothing can escape thy penetration. I must—I do confess it—though it were a sin before thee and our law. For next to the all-wise and bountiful Father of all good—next to thee, my parent, whom I am bound to obey and honour, there lives not upon earth the being whom I so greatly admire—whom I —— I feel

it in my very soul — whom I so much love.  
— Oh, spare me ! ” she added, as she broke abruptly off, “ you know all.”

“ Yes, dearest,” cried her father, “ I know you love him with a love pure and high; not the love of a grateful soul towards a benefactor—not that of a child for a father—the sister for the brother. Thou lovest him with the love of woman, and woe upon that love and upon us, for what will become of us in the eyes of our people ? ”

“ What God in his wisdom shall deem fit, my father,” replied Esther, with pale looks, as she felt she had now approached the crisis of her hopes.

“ I am unable to decide,” continued her father, sighing, as he recurred to his unfortunate situation, “ I am only a poor, persecuted, forlorn man. They have seized my wealth—they have thrust me forth into the wide world; all I have preserved is a weight of obligation which I can never repay to the noble young Dagobert, whose charitable hand relieved even my meanest wants. The grand duke’s star hath set, and the monies I granted him as a loan, are of a surety all lost. My other goods and

monies that I saved at Costnitz, together with the property which was in our house at Franckfort, have become the prey of false friends and of greedy judges, who thirst after hidden treasures, of which that hateful Zodiah hath prated the whereabouts. Again, must I venture into the world, naked as I first entered it, to ply my wits, and drive hard bargains, wherever possible, to build up once more the house which vile and heathenish hands have despoiled. And thou, my only jewel, I must leave thee—leave thee behind me, that thou too mayest not pine in penury and privation during my ill-starred wanderings, and perish before my eyes. Now, then, it is thine to decide, my daughter—I give thee the choice. Wilt thou throw thyself into the arms of Edom, or wilt thou return to our people—to those at Worms or at Nuremberg? True we have no friends—no relatives now left us; but Israel will not forsake Ben David's unhappy daughter."

Esther now rose, seized her father's hand, and bursting into tears, exclaimed, "Take me with you, father! by the Holiness of the promised kingdom—in the name of our Messiah,

take me with you ! I will guide your footsteps—I will slumber near you—over wilds and mountain steeps would I follow you, and try to preserve you from every ill. Content with a morsel of bread ; yea, I will gladly resign my life for you, be it God's will ; but never will I go back to Worms, nor yet to Nuremberg. Our people, to whom I fled at Franckfort, betrayed me ; yea, a son of the law has betrayed thee, and delivered the aged Jochaim unto death ; what should I expect from them ? The poor will be despised, and must continue poor ;—a wretched and sorrowful maiden should I be in their hands. No, father, let me follow you ; but the law and its followers I will renounce. The Lord hath consigned us to poverty ; my brothers have left us to despair ; but Christ hath redeemed me ; to listen to him, and do my duty to you, will finish the rest of my troubled days. If you will separate from me, I must follow my Redeemer ; I must become the hand-maid of the chosen of his father ; an angel of healing and salvation—my Redeemer and my God ! ”

“ What is it I hear ! Woe unto me—woe,” cried Ben David, in a wild, despairing tone ; “ and wilt thou no longer be a daughter of

Zion. Art thou become the victim of earthly passion, and no more heedest the voice of the Lord, and thy father's voice? Away; tarry not till I curse thee, and tear out this vile apostacy from thy heart! Did I only know that thy soul were not doomed, I would kill thee; yea, I would slay thee before my eyes. But away with thee; flee unto Edom; cling unto the bosom of the infidel. Perhaps the Lord of mercy will yet take pity on thy soul, yet touch it with the wand of his grace, that so thou may'st return into the truth—into the bosom of the law, when I am laid low in the grave!"

He stood up, the picture of trouble and dismay, and poured upon his daughter's head, bent speechless to the very ground, the flood of tears which sprung from the inmost sources of his grieved and wounded spirit. He then rushed from the hut, and flung himself, writhing in torture, among the thick rank grass and weeds, growing in wild luxuriance, behind Ammon's dwelling. Here, in utter solitude, he gave a loose to the bitter struggles of his disappointed and despairing feelings, with his eyes fixed upon the sky, the wild birds pouring their notes above his head, and clouds of insects

hovering over him in the still summer air; but Ben David lay unconscious of every thing around him. One thought alone seemed to possess him; he deplored his unhappy fate; he repented him that he had been born a Jew, that he had not the will and the power to change like his daughter;—to become reconciled and united with Dagobert, and present her to him as the just recompence of all he had done for them; and it was then that the terrible oath, which he had taken at the death-bed of his father, flashed across his mind, and crushing all his hopes, fell like a weight of mountains upon his breast.

“ I dare not leave her to receive that baptism, which, in Edom, is called the baptism of the second birth. No; I dare not”—reiterated the hapless father—“ permit her to renounce her faith before the people of our tribe. Oh, gracious God! guide me aright; support me, that I incur not the wrath of my departed parent.” He then offered up a fervent prayer, and feeling his spirit somewhat refreshed, he betook himself, during several of the following days, to solitary wanderings in the forest, without once recurring to the trying and bitter controversy

with his daughter. His lips were sealed, and his features betrayed no traces of the storm that had shaken his soul. He had come to a decision, and waited impatiently for Dagobert's arrival. Nor was Esther's heart less deeply moved; for that heart had suffered keenly, and by strong powers of reasoning, had been subdued to her will—the highest and most trying resolve to a passionately attached woman—to refuse, with her own lips, the object of her love.

Nor was it long before he stood at her side. She had heard the tramping of his steed near the wood—she knew the sound of his foot as he drew nigh—and he hastened to meet her half-way, like a messenger clothed with glad tidings, and life and love beaming in his handsome face.

“Welcome! thrice welcome! my long-suffering and sweet-beloved!” he exclaimed, full of frank and affectionate confidence, stretching out his hand; “and you, too, my good Ben David, you are welcome. When I rode hence, last time, I little dreamed of returning, laden with so much good fortune. Rejoice with me, my dear Esther; I am reconciled to my father, and I have restored to him his beloved

wife, all truth and confidence,—a second time his bride. All is well at home. The base and malicious Wallrade has been forbidden his house ; my father would not permit her to say a word. Count Montfort, to whom I am now fully reconciled, will gladly recommend me to the Emperor, and I shall obtain a dispensation to lay down my clerical office from the new Pope. The money also, borrowed by the duke, will be faithfully repaid you, my poor Ben David. What is best of all, my father has complied with my heart's wishes, and expects me to present him with a new daughter, and such a daughter, without a single objection to her circumstances, or to her name. Now, therefore, my charming Esther, I am authorized to offer you my hand—I am your lover indeed. Fate has so often and so strangely reunited us, that it must, I think, be the will of Heaven we should become united. Give me, then, your hand ; here is your father, and he will not refuse to see you happy."

Such was Esther's emotion at these words, that she could scarcely support herself ; her whole frame trembled ; she could not speak. At length she murmured—" Oh, Sir, you overpower me—this goodness—such a proposal."

"What, my Esther! goodness, forsooth; grace, you should say," replied Dagobert, laughing,— "only be gracious to me. As to an offer such as mine, you have doubly merited it, by your uniform excellence, your gentle, kind heart, your angel voice, and exquisite beauty."

"Her beauty may dazzle you," muttered Ben David, "but will it have the same impression on your father? Does he know that you are in love with a Jewess, and that an union with such, according to your law, is punished with the penalty of fire?"

"Now, by Heavens!" cried Dagobert, "and if Esther be indeed a Jewess, where is there a Christian girl to compare with her. Our Saviour commands us to love all men; and, if his words be not fulfilled, it is not the Godlike teacher's fault. Not a being on earth is more deserving of baptism—a Christian in soul as she already is—than thy daughter. She is willing also to become one;—to leave your tribe, and then before God and man, shall she become my wife."

"Noble being!" cried Esther, folding her hands, while a dark cloud gathered on Ben David's brow, and he fixed his eyes angrily upon his daughter.

" You long to be baptised, then, do you ? You have consented, have you, my pretty daughter ? " he continued, in a fierce ironical tone. " What shall I say to you ? What shall I do ? Shall I tear my garments, and throw ashes on my head, as for one dead and lost ; or shall I glory in thy good fortune in the race of worldly honours ? And you, my young master, is it your particular wish that Esther should be separated from me ; yet, dread you not to encounter the world's scorn, if you trample upon the heart of a too indulgent father ? "

" Of an upright father," observed Dagobert, " I cannot sport with a real passion. I can give no heed to words like yours. My resolution in this affair remains unshaken. You must permit your daughter to renounce her errors —those I mean of her creed ; you must permit her to become my wife ; and that the world's remarks may not disturb our happiness, and hurt my father's peace, we will retire far from my native city—enough for each other—too blest with such a wife. It will also give me pleasure, Ben David, if you will consent to renounce your people's faith ; but if not, a decent provision shall be made for you ; and we shall

rejoice to see you, only on condition of not crossing our threshold in the public eye. Decide on this now, and be wise ! ”

“ Thus is it demanded of the damned, in deciding upon their destiny,” replied Ben David, struggling inwardly with his feelings, “ Sir, I am now grown too old to throw aside my treasure—my light of life and truth, like a worn-out garment. Sir, I have no voice, no force to oppose a father’s wishes to his daughter’s against a man who deprives me of that treasure, with her own permission. Sir, I owe you many thanks ; for you are a distinguished man, and have taken a fancy to my daughter,—a vile Jewess ;—yea, to wed her, according to the forms of your church. Surely I am become your eternal debtor, for of a truth you have conducted yourself towards her as a brother—towards myself as a son. I am bound to confess, God help me, that I am a slave to you ; I have sinned against your house, and yet you have forgotten and forgiven it. What shall I say, then ? ”

“ The errors of my mother,” replied Dagobert, “ will easily be set right ; I feel no displeasure against you on that account ; though I also know that you spoke not the truth before

the council, and that the little Hans is no brother of mine."

"God be my judge," returned David passionately, "if I did not state every thing, as it was commanded me by your mother's confessor in the prison."

"So I believed," replied Dagobert, "therefore be content, and proceed, and I will answer you with the words of truth, if not of wisdom."

"Then, sir," resumed Ben David, "you have stated that I must submit to Esther's adoption of your faith, and of her union with you. Before the lords of your council must I consent to do it because I am a poor Jew, who is cast to the hounds, when it is wished to get rid of him. I must do it; but my gratitude is stronger in me, than the law of your lords. Yet my very obligations make me laugh when you are so cruel as to talk of depriving me for ever of my greatest treasure as a return for what you have done in our behalf. Yet will I rejoice at the loss, though my heart break at the sight; I will bless your bond of union, while I discharge my debt, and will not bring down on me the curse of my child, let what will afterwards become of me."

Esther and Dagobert were affected by this appeal, which neither had expected ; accompanied as his consent was by marks of such keen anguish and regret. The features of Dagobert glowed with shame, and his tongue refused to utter the feelings that swelled his breast.

" Truly, Ben David," he at length began, " you are not a common Jew, one who chimes his discourse to his best customer, to recommend his worst wares with the best grace. Thou hast learnt the art how to move the soul in its inmost depths, and I shall not easily tear the recollection of this painful yet joyful meeting from my heart. I will not be cruel ; nor convert the gratitude you say you owe me, into a source of pain to yourself. God forbid that this should be ; but in regard to your daughter, whose happiness will be my first object, she too has a voice in this matter. Let her freely speak her wishes ; will she follow her father, and the errors of his tribe, or her betrothed, to embrace the faith of the true church ? "

Ben David was silent, and the eyes both of the lover and the father were anxiously bent upon the fair girl, whose struggles to subdue her emotion, bore witness to the intensity of her

suffering. With the air of a true heroine, however, she quickly mastered her feelings, and addressing Dagobert, while she threw her arms around him: "Best and noblest of thy race," she exclaimed, "Lord of my thoughts and of my soul: that I love you, that I would cling to your heart for ever—for ever—I do, for the first time—I do confess it. But, angel of my life—of my peace, my adored Dagobert, should I be worthy of your love were I to hesitate in this bitter trial? Sometime it will surely cease; when we may all be united in one bond of amity and love, with no conflicting struggles like these. Then God will grant to my earthly prayers, that I may be yours. Here, oh see my father's bleeding heart; must I kill him—he who hath given me life? No, father, take me with thee, I am thine; let me attend thee until the close of thy weary day."

Breaking from the arms of her lover, she was clasped in those of her father, whose astonishment almost deprived him of speech. He covered his daughter's forehead with kisses, he soothed her in the most touching accents, while tears of joy and emotion rolled copiously down his hollow cheeks. Soon, however,

as the glow of the first triumph had subsided, and Ben David remarked the agitated features of the noble youth, scarcely able to support himself, yet gazing with smiles of probation upon Esther; when he looked too at his daughter, all deathly pale under the conflicting torrent of her feelings, his own countenance grew sad and troubled; he turned away towards the window, and gazing on the distant prospect, prayed inwardly to the God of Hosts, and the soul of his deceased father. Again he walked towards the suffering lovers, who stood silently with their hands clasped in each other's, as fearing that their separation were momentarily at hand. The old man spoke to his daughter in a calm and gentle voice.

“ Dearest child, thou hast refreshed my inmost spirit, and Jehovah will reward thee, if I cannot. But to take thee along with me—that I cannot do. To rejoin our brethren thou art unwilling. Whatever it may cost me, therefore, I will state to thee all that I think may serve to promote thy happiness, and leave no unpleasant recollection of a father in thy memory.”

Before proceeding further he sighed and

seemed to draw his breath in pain; while this short interval seemed an age of anxiety to the young lovers. They hung upon his next words, as the verdict of their life or death, till, after much hesitation he thus proceeded: " My wife —may she rest in Paradise—brought me two sons; and the last child she bore me was a maiden; yes, one whom I loved more tenderly than I did her brothers; unlike most of our tribe, who long to have sons, as for the wealth of the kingdom. Whenever I went forth I was accustomed to place my daughter upon her mother's lap; and threatened her, if the child suffered any harm ere my return, to banish that mother from my house and from my arms, as our law permitted; what then was the grief and terror of the poor wife, when one day in my absence, she found the infant dead in its cradle; one of the neighbour's cats having crept into the house, and laid itself upon the child's head, until it was smothered. Its mother made no loud lament; for she feared to be censured for her negligence, but sat down in a corner near the body, and began to weep bitterly. Just then my father Joachim entered the room,

and she spoke to him: ‘ See Raaf, behold the child! Thy son will drive me hence when he learns of its death, and yet I am innocent. Help me to pray over the babe, that it may awake before its father returns home with the boys;’ and so they prayed together, but Gabriel awoke it not.

“ When now my wife began to lament aloud, the wise old man said to her: ‘ Silence, good wife; I will go forth, and see what perchance the Lord, or his prophet Elias, may send me!’ And, lo, he had not been long gone, before he came back with a little baby in his arms.

“ ‘ See, woman; see here what God has sent me. Just entering the street, I found a dying mendicant, and this poor infant at her breast, which could no longer yield its food. Poor mother! I inquired, with God’s permission, wilt thou give me up this child ere it perish with thee? I am an honest man! The woman could not see; nor did she know me for a Jew; but she bade me take the infant, and added, ‘ It is the gift of God—it is already baptized by the name of Maria!’ These were her last words; and then I conveyed hither this

child, that she may be brought up in our faith, and David's heart be not troubled for the loss of his own.'

"So, they placed the living infant in the cradle, having removed the deceased; and on my return I perceived not the exchange, and caressed the little stranger. It was only on the death of old Joachim that I learnt what had been done, for which I never cease to bless his name, for my wife went to her home in peace, and I was not troubled at my child's death; and I can, moreover, unite two happy beings in the bonds of love; for thou, Esther, truly, wert the stranger's child."

"A Christian!" cried Dagobert, in a tone of triumph.

"Not thy daughter, old man?" exclaimed Esther, with a mixed emotion of joy and sorrow.

"Then," continued Dagobert, "nothing stands in the way of our union. My love, my Maria! stolen from our church! thou art again restored to it—and to me—to the hopes of love—to the promise of eternal life. Oh, Maria! let us bless the name of the old man, who confessed the imposition before he died. Let us

bless this upright Jew, who, despising the artifice of his tribe, has confided to us the secret that binds us in holy bonds, now and for ever."

Both extended their hands, in grateful emotion, towards the Jew.

"It pains, as much as it transports me," cried Esther, "to think that I am no longer your daughter. I am, then, an orphan in this world."

"What! hast thou not me, thy friend, thy husband?" rejoined Dagobert: "Hast thou not been just restored to thy religion—to thy Redeemer? and bearest even his virgin mother's name? Oh, I often anticipated what has now made us both so happy! You never were a Jewess; never shared in the hatred of that people against every other creed. You were always as pure and gentle-minded as the sweet saint whose name is also yours."

"Surely I dream," murmured Esther, as she yielded herself to the arms of her enraptured lover. "What I so long sighed for was already mine; I was born a Christian; and must I, my dear friend, still require the formal ceremony of taking my vows, and being baptized anew?"

"No, no," interrupted Ben David; "no, my child; it has been performed once, a second time would be wrong."

"Yes, wrong, and quite superfluous," observed Dagobert, "and why invent any new obstacle to the completion of our happiness? Mary, thou art now mine. This man has no longer any claims upon you, but only on my gratitude; that is his, and it will be shown by what I mean to do."

"Ben David," exclaimed Esther, "I have ever loved you as a daughter; for you I would have torn myself from the noble-minded being who is all to me in this world! Forgive me, dear Dagobert, for that, and you, Ben David, accept my utmost gratitude for making me wholly his."

"Eh, eh!" returned Ben David, shaking his head, and laughing with bitter irony, "it is good to see how your vision is deceived in these flattering beams of joy, just as in the bright glow of an evening sun. But a little time ago I had a daughter—I now have none. A true and faithful heart would have clung to mine, through exile and through death; now I bear with me a widowed breast, like the palms of the

wilderness. Yet praised be the Lord! blessed be the words of my mouth, for your whole happiness is my work."

With tears in his eyes, he tore himself from the transported lovers, and went forth into the woods, and thence by a private path into the park. There, under a canopy of shady beeches, he threw himself on his knees, and in the evening hour, prayed to his Father in heaven, who had already enlightened with worlds of splendid stars the mighty firmament above. "Forgive me, great God of Israel," he prayed, as he bent his face to the earth, "forgive me, if I have done aught against the sanctity of thy law; for, oh, I have not sinned against that eternal law of conscience which thou hast planted in every breast. Forgive me that I freely gave away a daughter of Zion, who, sooner or later, would have been drawn aside to Mount Seir, instead of dwelling in thy holy Salem. Yea, I have preserved my oath, which I swore on the hands of my dying father. I have received the gratitude of thy creatures. I have consigned thy child to the care of the strong and mighty, not to the grovelling, low, trampled tribe, bending their heads like bulrushes

before the continual tempest of thy wrath. Oh, build up the towers of Zion right speedily, mighty and zealous God ! Grant me also that I may meet in paradise my adopted daughter, and that noble-minded, virtuous youth. Thou, only thou, provest the heart and reins ; before thee the pride of Behemoth is tamed. Nothing is impossible to thee ; thy grace can purify as the fire, and lead the infidel into the ways of truth. With me, so long as I tarry on thy earth, deal with me after thy good pleasure. I have become, under the scourge of thy anger, and hatred of the enemy, no longer a man ; but like unto a worm, a by-word of the people ; the scorn of my tribe ; yet blessed, ever blessed, be thy will—thy name extolled on high—thy holiness praised by all—the one true, adored, and eternal God.” Strengthened and refreshed in spirit, Ben David arose, and went his way ; but never more did he bend his steps in search of his lost daughter.”

## CHAPTER V.

“LET the hound run his course, learned sir ! The rogue will hardly cheat the gallows after all. Pity that my bolt went not through his hard skull instead of his skull-cap.”

“The wretched man ! ” exclaimed the other to old Ammon, as he sat before him on a large stone, smoothly clothed in his clerical habit, and panting for breath. “He has taken all my baggage, and I have to thank you, my good friend, that he did not take my life also. The rogue had a great mind to have seized upon the money I carried in my belt.”

“I dare say,” replied Ammon, “but tell me how it happened that a learned clerk, like you, found himself at this time of night in these villainous bushes. Were you looking for thieves ? Gentry like you are seldom driven like a poor devil to

make use of your legs instead of your carriage?"

"I was taking my way from Frankfort, intending to reach Friedberg, and I see you guess my mode of travelling, for my chaise broke down about a mile hence," replied the stranger with a smile. "Well, I was sitting rather melancholy, and somewhat shaken, on the roadside, waiting, with my baggage, the return of the driver, who had gone on the horse for lights and assistance. There were few passengers on the road, when suddenly there came a man crossing the fields through a by-path towards me, stark and stern enough to look at, with a stout cudgel in his hand, and casting a keen glance about him. But as he walked straight forward with a negligent air, as if he knew the place well and the folks about it, I kept my seat quietly as he passed. The time seeming long, I asked him if he had seen my post-boy, and told him of my unlucky accident. He said I might have to wait a good while before the boy returned from the village, long enough to reach Friedberg, but that if I liked to follow him he would show me a nearer cut across the fields, and I should be there presently.

The broad-shouldered fellow also proposed to carry my baggage, and said, laughing, that it was mere child's play to him to take it as far as the inn at Friedburg—that he would gladly do it for a good glass when we got there. It was agreed, and he took the bundle on his shoulders, while I followed without the least suspicion, so that I scarcely noticed the way he brought me, he chatted so pleasantly as we went along. At last we came to a very solitary spot, and on looking about I could see nothing of tower or steeple towards Friedberg. On noticing this singular fact, he began to swear lustily that he must have mistaken the path ; but the evening was hardly set in, and there would be time enough to reach the town—I should see the steeple of the great church soon. As he now began to show himself in his true colours, he thought best to make short work of it, and dealt me a sudden blow with his thorn stick upon my neck, which as suddenly brought me to the ground. I was no match for him, and as he seemed quite serious in following up the business, I had nothing left but to cry out lustily for help. As I shouted pretty loud, your ear luckily caught the sound before the rascal had

finished his work. Let him keep the bundle, then, if he must, I doubt not but the Lord will soon spavin one of his nimble legs, and send punishment slowly after him. May the curse ——”

More wishes of the same kind were on the tip of the stranger's tongue, but they were spent in low, grumbling murmurs. Ammon then spoke, at the same time laughing heartily:—“ Now let us have done with these thundering oaths and curses. A good round fit of swearing is refreshing to a manly heart, and you are yet at liberty without the pastoral pale, till you get back to your clerical duties. If you like, I can teach you some Turkish and Wallachian oaths, which sound far better than our German slang. But none will be of any use to bring you back what you have lost;—it would have been far better I had lamed him in one of his knees. Where, however, are you next bound, learned sir? The city is about two miles hence to the left, and hard to hit upon by a stranger. I would willingly show you the way, if you dared venture upon another guide; you know you have no baggage to lose now. But I believe, we must wend our way back into the woods, and you

had, perhaps, best not trust me, for the people say that old Ammon looks like the devil himself."

" If I had possessed the wit not to trust the smooth looks of yon villain," replied the stranger;—" he had a sharper's visage, and brass-red hair."

" Take care of these signs in future," chuckled Ammon; " but cannot you tell me the track of the sinner; for I would willingly have a look at the rogue face to face, as at a falcher in a trap."

" I remarked little about the fellow but his countenance, and know not what road he took. From a buckler on his left breast, he might perhaps be some new convert; yet I would not trust to what I saw."

" A baptized Jew, eh!" cried Ammon; " that is possible, and it is no safe company; for he changes his God as a trooper does his chief. Yet it is all one to what creed he clings. I have experienced enough of all that in my campaigns. The Heathen stands as well in my eyes, as the best Christian; and if you would deign, learned sir, to enter my hut, I will show you an unbelieving maiden, whose like is not

to be found in the whole christened and unchristened world."

"So," muttered the stranger, who now appeared lost in thought, but in a few moments he added; "I will accept your offer, master greybeard; I will go with you, but only for the purpose of finding shelter, as my neck smarts; —not to see your pretty maiden."

"Of a truth," replied Ammon, "I have never been eager to invite a guest into my little home. You are the first, and a warm straw couch at least shall not be denied you. On the morrow we can put you into your way towards Friedberg. Come, let me help you along, for as I live, you begin to totter as you walk. But why do you fix your eyes in that way upon yonder defile? Why you turn paler and paler; what is it ails you?"

The stranger still stood as if transfixed to the spot, with his eyes bent in the same direction, when a man appeared running quickly, but as if almost wearied, and clambered up the defile. He then approached so near them as almost suddenly to confront Ammon and the stranger. He drew his cap close over his eyes, and turned away with a cry of surprise, running through

the underwood as if pursued by an apparition. While the stranger gazed after him lost in astonishment, Ammon, who had recognized him, called out:—"Ho, ho! softly Jew, whither so fast? Stop, stop! Have you stolen any thing?" His voice seemed to lend fresh speed to the runaway, and when Ammon noticed this, he burst into a great rage, interrupted only by the reiterated inquiries of the stranger, "if he knew the man, and who he was?"

"Know him!" exclaimed Ammon; "the tattooed heretic is remarkable enough. That is the father of the pretty Esther of whom I spoke."

"Esther! her father?" cried the stranger, putting his hand to his forehead, as if doubting whether he were in a dream. "Wonderful heaven! I, too, know that man. His name?"

"The devil a bit do I know it," replied Ammon shaking his fist in the direction where the Jew had disappeared. I cannot remember his name."

"Ben David?" continued the stranger. "If you will say yes, I will esteem you as a friend and a brother."

"In the name of all the Saints, then, yes," cried Ammon; "that is the rogue's name. But why should the man fly as if he had run away

with the crown jewels ? Stop, hound ; for if I find any thing wrong at home—if any thing has happened to my good Esther, may the devil catch me, but I will not only seize thy moneys, but have thy feet shod with burning pitch, to add to thy torments.”

“ Esther ! Ben David !” ejaculated the stranger, in strange emotion, shaking his head and clasping his hands, while he swayed his body backwards and forwards ; his pale face betraying all the passions which shook his frame —joy, grief, humiliation, and wild anxiety, in succession.

“ God be with us !” observed Ammon, in a blunt voice ; “ did you not bear that gown like a Christian teacher, I should take you for a rabbi, you look so wry in limb and feature. Leave these megrims behind you, and walk boldly on. I cannot wait ; I must see what may have happened at home.”

“ At home—yes, at home !” replied the stranger ; “ let us hasten to see Esther. I know her—I know him—he who ran away. I must know his strange destiny.”

“ You must tumble yourself into a bed of warm hay,” thundered Ammon. “ Blood and oons ! man—that blow of the thorn stick must

have cracked thy pate, besides giving thee a twist in the neck. Be patient a bit, and don't go quite staring mad, till I have got thee safely under cover. See, this is the path ; there is my cottage chimney ; a few steps more, and, spite of all the Kobolds on earth, we are at home."

Ammon's fears became somewhat quieted when he heard the friendly bark of his dog, and saw Esther seated, as usual, on the spot which was once Regina's favourite resort. Dagobert's bride appeared sunk in sweet contemplation, which strange and tender emotions, on the eve of her approaching nuptials, were well calculated to excite. Her heart's betrothed had taken his departure, on his return to the city, intending to return the next evening with his new presents and wedding-dresses for his beloved. She had accompanied him as far as the path into the woods, and, after calling aloud upon the name of Ben David, had thrown herself, to await the good man's return, upon the soft dewy grass. Ammon, who first made his appearance at the entrance into the park, was joyfully welcomed by her ; and, on seeing him in company, she conjectured the person must be her father. But a stranger met her

view ; he bowed to her, and the more she looked at him, as he kept his eyes, with a look of recognition, fixed upon her face, she seemed to remember having somewhere seen him before. Recollections of former days arose in her mind ; and that eagle nose, sharp visage, and compressed lips, were not new to her.

“ Esther !” said the stranger, “ Ben David’s daughter ; I should never have known you again. But don’t you know who I am ? I was once called Ascher ; and cannot you remember me ? ”

“ Jehovah ! our God ! ” exclaimed Esther ; “ it is Ascher—my brother Ascher ! Welcome, oh, welcome home, thou long-lost one ! ”

“ Well,” murmured old Ammon to himself, “ this is fine work ! the father and brother have already made their appearance—who next ? No, no, young one, things must not go on thus. To-morrow the Lady of Durningen shall know all, and she will provide.”

He then went, in no very good-humour, to his hut ; caressing his dogs, while the conversation between his two guests became so earnest, that they quite forgot there was such a person as Ammon in the world.

“ Lost ! saidst thou,” exclaimed Ascher, in

a mournful tone, at the same time seizing her hand ; “ truth comes not purer from its source in heaven, than those words from thy lips. Lost I was !—lost am I now !—and so should I remain, did I not wish, at the right time, to recover myself once more. Ah ! Esther, look not upon me ! I have already witnessed my father’s wrath ; let me not incur also your contempt ! Forgive me for having fallen from the faith to error ; from the law of my fathers to a strange creed. Reflection has enlightened me ! the dark spirit of false knowledge has left me ! Hope and good fortune have been my temptation, and induced me to do what I now repent; as the great King David even repented of his sins !”

“ Eh ! what is it I hear ?” returned Esther ; “ you repent of having renounced the law, and embraced the true creed ? Oh ! waver not in this pure and holy faith. Hold fast to the leading line of life, which Divine Mercy has extended to you !”

“ Do I understand you right, Esther ? is it my sister who speaks ?” ejaculated Ascher, with surprise. “ Is this the language of a daughter of Ben David—the son of Joachim—who never omitted to fulfil a single duty prescribed by the

law? How comes it that you check me when I haste to do what is right—to repent and atone?"

"Alas, Ascher!" replied Esther, mild and friendly; "I should not have reproached you, even had all remained as it once was; but a change has taken place. I am no longer called Esther now; my name is Mary. I am a Christian—even from my birth. I am not David's daughter, nor sister of thine!"

"Not David's daughter—not my sister! how can that be?"

Esther then related all that had occurred up to the present time, and Ascher could scarcely credit his own senses. "Oh, God of Jacob! what have I heard? May the Lord bless Ben David's father, and forgive his son the lie he hath uttered over his grave! May I die this hour, without prayer—or help—or hope—like the most abandoned reprobate in his sins, if what my father stated to you be the truth! How?—Ben David is a gentle parent!—he will make his children happy!—he will take upon himself all reproach, in order to spare the consciences of his children! He will himself commit a sin, in order that thou, Esther, may

escape it! Thou art David's daughter, and no other! I sat by the cradle above a month, attending thee through an illness! I and my brother never accompanied our father, as he said. No change of children ever took place! My grandfather brought no Christian infant into his house; he never dreamed of committing such a sin against the law; and this Jewish character on thy little finger, and this mark upon thy left hand, were made when thou wert a few weeks old, by old Joachim, as the type of our house. By the head of my fathers, I vow it is the truth! Thou art of our blood, and the blood of Israel!"

"God of Heaven!" exclaimed Esther, in utter helplessness and anguish of mind; "if that were possible—how horrible! Where is your father? You must inquire for him!"

"No, no, my child!" replied Ascher, sure of his case, "I shall not see my father—he has taken to flight—he shunned the very sight of me."

Esther's astonishment was indescribable; and still more, when she learnt what had occurred upon the road.

"It is true, then—too true," continued Ascher,

“ that nothing but paternal love induced Ben David to impose upon you. A brother’s arrival, however, has set all to rights, and rescued you from a dark impending fate. Hear me, sister, and believe what I say. My father destined me to the study of our law. In the schools I acquired the art of interpreting tongues, and the science of the Cabala in all its branches. Then it suddenly struck me, that I would make my fortune among Christians; and a distinguished man from Mentz, who studied the Hebrew with me, confirmed me in my views. My disposition was mild, and it was my fate to hang upon the advice of others; so I forswore the law of my fathers, that it might go well with me in this world. My knowledge was now turned to account; I rose from the dust; and the same friend procured me a professorship in Hebrew Literature at Heidelberg. All went well; the new professor was applauded, and never omitted a public assembly or a mass, until he quite forgot the former despised Jew. Nothing could have disturbed my good fortune, but the thorn that rankled in my bosom. My office required that I should possess an entire knowledge of the Scriptures, and after long and deep

reflection, I found that all our doctrines, as they were followed by our fathers, formed the root and ground-work of the new one; and that without the former, that of the Redeemer could never have had either origin or increase. But my conscience smote me, and after several years of inward struggles, and suffering all the tortures of the condemned, I succeeded, with the help of Israel's God, in vanquishing my worldly desires, and the lust of honour and of gain. I threw up my office, to return, like the prodigal, to my father, and embrace the true faith. At Franckfort I first learnt your cruel destiny;—my father's flight, as it is termed—the death of Joachim, and lastly, your disappearance. After all the strange adventures I have experienced, I am convinced that my arrival in this secluded spot, must be ordered by the hand of God, which has brought me hither in time to save you!"

"Wonderful, ever praised Lord!" ejaculated Esther. "What bitter thorns hast thou planted in my breast. Ben David taken to flight, and I still his child! Sprung from Israel! O, my brother, be merciful, and tell me that it is all false—all a dream!"

"Sure as the Lord made the heavens and

the earth; sure as I am now living, the words of my lips are true, my sister. I am sent as a prophet—an instrument in higher hands, to snatch thee from an abyss of perdition and woe. Listen to my voice, Esther, and you will never repent what I now advise you to do. Break off with the youth who resides at Rome. Renounce the idea of becoming his, or of his faith. Flatter yourself not with the thought, that not you, but Ben David, will have to pay the penalty of the lie, which only his devoted love for you induced him to pronounce, at the risk of his own immortal soul. But the Lord our God is a mighty and jealous God, who visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, until the thousandth generation. Shame and sorrow alone would follow the unblest nuptials—monstrous productions in soul and body, like the devils who yoked Leviathan with Silas."

"Hold! have done, Ascher!" cried the despairing girl, in accents of horror and dismay. But the destroyer of her peace, and all she held dear, pursued his infernal triumph.

"Hear me, lost daughter of Salem, yield thyself not into Moloch's power. Thou wilt be

his slave. Why should he not become a son of Jacob, if he be earnest in his love. While he despises the seed of Abraham, and insists on making thee commit a sin, he condemns thee to perdition with his own lips. For thy conversion is sin ; and thou wilt be the victim. He who turns apostate from his own Lord and master—from his God ; how can he be faithful either in his house, or in his nuptial vows ? Who would covet fidelity like his ; and who would witness his final hour ? Believe me, I know the feelings of the renegade, I feel them yet ; and never shall I have relief until I expiate my errors in our schools. Return, then, on thy path, ere thou need to make this public atonement for thy sin. Look on me ! see how the Lord hath smitten me ! how my bones stare through my skin ! how my body hath grown like unto a shadow. Neither sleep, nor peace visit my couch ; hope hath deserted my breast ; such things cannot last. Even though I were to stand for years at the doors of our synagogue, and prostrate my body as a threshold over which the faithful of the Lord might pass to worship him,\* still I should never be what I once was, unless

\* An ancient mode of stonement among the Jews.

I rescued thee from a like fate;—I should pine in grief and remorse, as our poor father, the good and generous David, in all the torments of a lost spirit. You would be the author of his death; and my latest sigh would also be your work!"

"Oh, peace! cruel brother!" sobbed Esther, wringing her hands in despair. "You harrow up my feelings;—you break my heart, which never wished to injure living being, but only to be, and to make others happy. I would not be the cause of yours and my father's death! Oh, no; how could I enjoy life, if purchased at such a price? I will be strong; stronger than my sex,—I will tear myself from the heart I best love."

"Then will Jehovah bless thee!" said Ascher, "Come along with me, daughter of Abraham and of Jacob. I am in possession of wealth to rejoice our hearts; come and share my lot; comfort me in my atonement, and my remorse. Support me, and heaven will restore to us our father, whose troubles are only the consequence of my crime."

"Yes, only I must bid one farewell—one to my dear friend;—I must."

"No, no!" shouted Ascher; "fly the smooth tongue of the Midianite, he has deceived thee; he will deceive thee again. The breath of the serpent will reach us here, and destroy us. Thou must follow me. Would that the night had not set in; but light or dark, thou must away with me early on the morrow."

"Cruel, as you are," cried Esther, "you trample on my heart; you grind my spirit in the dust. But I must be a sacrifice to avert the wrath of God; and that it may be well with you upon the earth. I will try to believe that my Dagobert hath forsaken me; that he became the victim of the dread tribunal, at the time when my soul trembled for his fate. But will thoughts like these bring peace to my spirit; will they not rankle like piercing thorns in my breast? To my conscience I appeal; that will support me, and the great God who created me out of the dust. In his holy name then, my brother, I will follow thee!"

## CHAPTER VI.

Poor Dagobert had not the slightest suspicion of all that had occurred in his absence. With the joy of a young lover on the eve of happiness, he had selected from all sides the most beautiful presents for his bride, and was now looking forward to the happy moment when, on the following evening, he should have the delight of presenting them to her at the hut in the forest. On his approach he saw the figure of a woman, apparently lost in thought, and her simple attire looked like that of Esther herself. The youth redoubled his steps—he flew to meet his beloved ; but she was not there. Instead of her, he saw Regina—the deceived Regina ; the glow of shame rose upon his cheek, and tears started into his eyes.

“ Good heavens ! ” exclaimed he, “ you here, my good lady ! here, and alone ? What am

I to judge from this silence ; this strange emotion ? Where is Esther ? ”

“ I have to deliver to you her last farewell,” replied Regina, in a low tone, and sobbing ; but her distress changed into alarm when she saw the young man scarcely able to support himself. She could with difficulty reply to his rapid and breathless inquiries ; yet at length she went on to say, when her emotion had a little subsided, that on walking into the wood, early on the previous morning, to breathe the fresh air, after long confinement to a sick chamber, she had met Esther, accompanied by a dark-looking man, at some distance from the public road, and that she had accosted the young woman, making inquiries after Dagobert himself. ‘ Oh, my good maiden,’ exclaimed Esther, ‘ convey to him my last, my heart-felt adieu ! Tell him that he will seek for me in vain ; that Ben David has unintentionally deceived us ; that my brother has snatched me from the abyss over which I stood ; that I dared not renounce the law of my God ;—but that the memory of all his goodness will be for ever enshrined in my soul. Tell him, though he may accuse, he will some time rejoice, over the victory I have won, when happy

in the affections of a more worthy and fortunate being than her he has lost.””

It is impossible to describe the effect of these words upon Dagobert. He sighed deeply:—“The dream, then, that flattered my young hopes is departed. The object for which I struggled, for which I would have pledged all I held dear in life, is fled. The dark fanaticism of a brother has clouded all our fondest hopes; it has violated the sanctuary of the best and purest love. In God’s name be it so! The tempest of adversity I will still brave like a man; but that such a bond should be so rudely severed must and will leave a wound behind, which no time can close. O man, man! my confidence thus betrayed! The father granted me a blessing which I had hardly dared to look for, when the son snatches it from my grasp; and even my beloved coldly sanctions the cruel deed. It is done; she is gone; and woe is me!”

“Alas, my dear young friend!” said his companion, kindly, at the same time gently pressing his hand, and raising her dove-like eyes towards his, which were filled with tears, “Who shall say that she whom you now regret, gave you a cold-hearted farewell? For

truly she shed warm tears enough; tears that made me (though I never liked her before) love her whom I saw could love so well."

" Ah!" replied Dagobert, " but had you known what she really is—so pure, so beautiful, so good; then would you pity me, indeed! She was the chiefest jewel in the crown of woman; a queen among her race, peerless in all that adorns her sex. Yea, a monument might well be raised to her virtues, even by Christians themselves—a sacred edifice upon the spot where she dwelt."

" But," rejoined his companion, laughing, " you scarcely speak like a Christian; I should think ill of you were I not in your confidence, and knew your heart. I have run some risk in thus venturing to acquaint you with what passed in the wood; my mother will never permit me to go thither again; such an adventure, she says, is little becoming a young maiden. But I knew what you suffered, and though I had died in the attempt, I would have come to acquaint you."

" How can I reward you?" said Dagobert, " how express my thanks?"

The face of the maiden glowed at these words

—she stretched out her hand, and added, in a trembling voice:—“Even were my mother to upbraid me ever so much, I would bear it all willingly, could it relieve your sufferings; I do not like to see a sorrowful face. Or if you must grieve, I would join my tears with yours; I would shed them all if I could.”

“The tears of innocence,” said Dagobert, “are a relief, a balm to the mourner’s spirit. Yes, my noble-hearted girl, your goodness, your devotion to me, the holy sympathy which glistens in those eyes, reads me a pure and delightful lesson; it consoles, it gives me courage to live. Yet must I wander on my dark path alone?”

“Alone!” inquired Regina, anxiously; “and why?”

“Because I shall never love woman more,” returned the youth. “I am a solitary wretch; —no home will ever receive me—no fond being ever smile my welcome;—a wanderer—an outcast—I must finish my dark journey alone!”

“No, no, God forbid you should do that,” cried Regina; “say you will not despair. For I have often heard my mother declare how selfish it is; and that a selfish, solitary being

can never become happy. An old bachelor is such an one. He has no heart for any thing ; not even to feel for his dog. You were not formed for such a life as his, my noble, young friend ; you, once so cheerful, and so good, to be made miserable too—and all for the loss of a Jewess."

"I see," replied Dagobert, "you mean me well, my gentle Regina ; and would to heaven my former happy days could be restored. Then at least I imagined that I was free, and should, perhaps, have been doomed to wear no heavier chains than what were so sweetly imposed by you."

"Oh, what have you said !" exclaimed the maiden tittering, and covering her face with her hands.

During this scene, the Lady of Durningen, accompanied by Ammon, had approached the place where they stood. "Regina!" she cried, eagerly, while Dagobert hastened to conduct the terrified girl to her mother. The latter addressing him said : "I do not thank you, Sir, for your presence here ; for I have now--only too late--learnt through Ammon what my daughter took care to conceal from me. You have most unworthily availed yourself of her folly, to effect the elopement of a girl

of bad parentage and doubtful character from my estate ; and now, perhaps, it is your object to seduce the affections of an inexperienced creature like this, as your former mistress seems to have left you in the lurch. I am but a woman, and cannot do myself justice, as a man would in this case ; but as far as I can, I will take care to protect my own property."

" Your suspicions, my good lady," replied Dagobert, calmly, " pain me, because they are unjust ; for though I might lose what my heart holds most dear, I would not, therefore, trouble the peace of others, much less in a matter of this kind, and especially of those whom I so highly value. Your daughter is blameless ; she has done me a service which calls for my most grateful thanks ; but she will herself convince you that you have no reason to esteem me less now than hitherto." He then made his silent obeisance to the ladies, and disappeared. He could not, however, help feeling very deeply the suspicions then entertained against him, added to all his other sufferings ; many times he stopped, and stood doubtful what course to pursue—whether he should bend his steps back to Franckfort, or

endeavour to discover some traces of Esther. Yet here his pride stood in the way : " No," he cried, " if she could be so indifferent as to leave me without even saying farewell, let her go. She never could have understood me—far less prove worthy of my love." Still his heart throbbed as he said this : " Oh, how dare I thus accuse her? she understood me well; her love was all purity and truth. She is worthy of all I feel and will ever remain so."

Then he thought of his father, now restored to him again, on the little Hans, and the good and learned Johannes, with his attachment and devotion to his cause. Spite of all his misfortunes he felt that there were yet some ties which bound him to the world. He stretched out his arms as if he would still embrace his lost loved one, were he to follow her to the end of the earth. He called aloud upon her name; he armed himself with fresh courage, and turned towards his native city, resolved once more to assert the rights and duties of a man.

He had hardly resumed his way when a low voice from behind some bushes saluted his ear : " But, Veit, I say, why don't you send the rogue a stage back as far as Ermanglung." :

"Faith then, leave me, Leuenberg," replied the Hornberger, for it was these two worthies who lay behind the bushes, "faith, I am not yet tired, like a staggered horse that has found his master. The sharp ride, indeed, had somewhat irked me; and you, my good comrade, whose arms are not made of wax, had got yourself into very odd company. Come, tell me how you came among such a gang?"

"Oh, it signifies nothing," replied Leuenberg; "and my wise head aches to that degree, that I have very little to say on it. Since I left Neufalkenstein, I have met with a thousand misfortunes. How I repent me for having followed that restless Doring, who started off as if the city bailiffs had been at his heels. The madcap went his own way, and I went mine. Well, at the castle I found nothing to do, and turned my steps hither, where I have been keeping a look out for what I could catch, without a single good adventure. A couple of poor devils of boors not worth the trouble of cutting up, are all I have got. But stop! I had forgotten that rogue of a Jew, red Zodiah, or whatever the devil may have dubbed him for want of a Christian name."

"Oh," interrupted the Hornberger: "how lovely is my little god-child; but why is he here-abouts?"

"That Hebrew dog," returned Leuenberg, "kept behind the bushes far safer than before me; but the other sharper relied on his personal prowess, and stood up like a veteran thief. Only yesterday he plundered a traveller whose property is brought to the hammer this day. How it fared with me in the other adventure, you know full well; for without your arrival I should ere this have laid stiff and stark under the cold canopy of the skies. Now I can dress my wounds; only tell me what brought you back; was it the business you had in hand at Franckfort?"

"Perhaps it might have been," returned the other; "thunder and storm! I should have liked to see you in my situation. Why, man, I rode quite unconcerned into the city, and bought all the weapons I wanted. Afterwards, on seeing the street swarming with inquisitive people, running in one direction, I could not help inquiring what was the matter."

"The vile old robber, Bechtram von Bilbel," has just been adjudged, was the reply. On

hearing this, I could scarcely forbear ripping my informer up alive, such was my horror at thinking that I might meet the very man I had come to rescue on his way to the place of execution. Yes, and I thought it my duty yet to try it, should it cost me my neck. O, what a shocking spectacle I beheld. You should have seen the bearing of our brave old chief in the bonds of those wretches, whom he had once led in triumph. Thunder and lightning ! such was the grief I felt—so fiercely did I burn for vengeance, when I saw him, with all his former pride and courage, led to the entrance of that infernal slaughter-house, over which hung the black sign of doom, that I longed to become a furious storm to burst upon the heads of those craven slaves who had sat in council over his brave spirit, as if they, and not he, were best deserving of such a fate. At length they began to strike off his chains, and prepare him for death. They brought him a cloth to bind round his eyes ; but a thousand curses ! they little knew their man. He refused the favour, keeping his eyes wide open under the sword of the executioner, already glittering over him, while throngs of craven citizens stood at a humble dis-

tance, as if they dreaded the very weapon they wielded. As my ill stars would have it, just as I was gazing on the fearful scene, filled with indignation, and grasping my arms, the eye of Bechtram fell upon mine. In spite of my disguise, he instantly knew me, and cried out—‘ Ho ho, Hornberger! you here, and must I die? Help, man, help!’ In the next instant his head fell; but suddenly all other heads were directed towards me, when I gave my horse the spur, and sought to make my way through the crowds, as busy about me as bees, and sure to sting me to death were I once caught. I laid about me stoutly, and left many a mark on the good citizens’ skulls, by which to remember the Hornberger to the last days of their lives. I soon cleared me a passage, followed by showers of stones and missiles of all kinds; when away went my horse and I—over field and flood—till we joined you, my old friend, here.”

“ And you are welcome: I, too, have had my adventure, as I was informing you; and I must further make you master of my conversation with Zodiah, the Jew. On inquiring how the young rogue found himself, and why he had

come hither, he replied, that at Frankfort they were looking for his head, which he did not like to give ; and that he had been summoned before the Secret Tribunal for contempt. ‘ What did I do on hearing this ? ’ he continued ; ‘ why, if I did not relish the first invitation, it was hardly likely that I should honour the second, and so I went still further off.’ ”

“ Right, right ! ” exclaimed Hornberg ; “ and what did he take along with him, I wonder ? ”

“ Just what the noble lords had left him,” replied Veit ; “ and among others, he robbed the man to whom he had sold a fellow-creature.”

“ Rascally Jew ! ” muttered the Hornberger, between jest and earnest ; “ by our Lady, comrade Veit, I am Frederick’s godfather, and will maintain the emperor’s christendom against all the Jews in the world. We will give fair play to the greatest scoundrel in the whole imperial dominions, but to no Jew.”

“ Had I remained a Jew,” returned Zodiah, in a scornful tone, “ the Holy Tribunal would have left me in peace. Had I been a true son of Jacob, perhaps Esther would have been mine, and nothing of all this befallen me.

Had I only been a prudent man—I should have discovered the whole nest of them in my own immediate neighbourhood. Stupid, stupid, Zodiah!” and here he struck his forehead for rage, while his companions turned away laughing, to enjoy a little repose.

“ Had I only known, yesterday, that it was the villain of a Jew which I had in my power, I would not have left him alive;” and he then went on to relate the affair of the cottage in the forest, of Ben David, Esther, and the brother from foreign parts.

“ You stupid booby!” said Veit, “ why not tell us that before. A pretty girl would be always acceptable to me, even though a Jewess.”

“ Yes, truly!” rejoined Hornberg, with an oath; “ may Satan torture me if I do not repay the villain in his own coin !”

“ And not him alone,” added Leuenberg; “ the whole herd is hateful to me!—the old niggard—the abandoned Margaret, was disgraced by an union with a low citizen—the little changeling, Hans, who is no other than a bastard; and, above all, that base-minded Wallrade, and the priest who betrayed us—I should have lost my head, had not my good little sister ransomed me with her

jewels. When I forget that trick of the artful wretch, may I be flead alive!"

" It would give me infinite delight to see the whole of them burnt alive," said Veit.

Zodiah, who had only half heard the above discourse, as he sat musing with his hands upon his knees, and a dark lowering visage, roused himself at the words of the last speaker, and said—" It is well to talk of my want of address, noble sirs. Yet, dolt as I am, you would do right to follow my advice. I am a dog compared with you. You say it, and I will not presume to think otherwise. But the dog has the same fate as his master: let us, then, declare war against all—for all are engaged against us. Not only the old miser, but his whole house; and with his house all Frankfort, shall be involved in the same ruin!"

Both the men regarded the Jew with surprise: at last Hornberg said—" Churl! thou hast had a bright thought beyond the stretch of my fancy."

" Diether, and all his family—all Frankfort, men, women, and children!" inquired Leuenberg, eagerly; and the lust of murder, ruin, and booty, glared in his fiery eyes.—" Speak, Jew! speak! delay not."

"The wilderness hath ears like the hound," replied Zodiah. "The solitary chamber is a fitter place to discuss such things. Besides, it is already dark, and the night air is piercing."

"Yes," said Leuenberg; "I feel it on my wounded head; but I know of no inn that is safer than this place."

"It will be better to pass the night under our mantles," said Hornberg. "We must trust nothing to the day in which Bechtram has been sent post out of the world."

"Not so!" interrupted Zodiah; "come with me, and I will conduct you to a place of safety, where, in case of scent, no one will find you—to a splendid house, and one which is as secure as Abraham's bosom."

"Shall we trust this dog of a Jew?" asked Hornberg of his companion.

"Why not?" said the latter, with his accustomed coolness; "for my knife would draw his heart's blood before we could be betrayed."

"Heaven will look to it!" replied the Jew, scoffingly. "I prize my life and body too highly, to say nothing of my masters and friends. Come boldly along with me. I know of a by-path, and our people are to be found every where."

## CHAPTER VII.

"CAME you alone, my soul?" inquired Diether, with surprise, as he shook Dagobert's hand, on entering the apartment, where he and his wife, Margaret, were sitting in friendly converse, with the little Hans playing at their feet. Giving a nod of assent, Dagobert embraced his parents, but cast a keen glance at Margaret, as he kissed the child.

"See," resumed Diether, in a mild and affectionate tone, "I rejoice at the sight; I will not deny it. The prayer I offered up to heaven only last night, is now fulfilled. Thou hast manfully struggled with a passion unworthy of thee, the object of which would have been received by us as a daughter, only as a proof of our extreme attachment to yourself; for even had the young Jewess consented to adopt our faith, we

could not, in our hearts, have wished to see her added to our family circle."

"Yes," rejoined Margaret, whose eye had fallen under the searching glance of Dagobert, but was now bent on him with a kindly expression; yes, my best son, though I desire your happiness with my whole heart, yet I cannot but rejoice with your father, that you have escaped the danger of such an union. It is what we both hoped for and approve; and my husband will further inform you of what he has next in view, and which I know he has much at heart."

"What further—what is it?" inquired Dagobert, calmly.

"Your tone gives me confidence," replied Diether, "and I trust there will appear nothing harsh in what I am going to ask of you. If so, lay it to the account of the severe trials I have suffered, and to my heart-felt wish to reconcile myself to heaven, and to be at peace. But thy mother's vow, my son, permits me not to finish what I would say. She is not yet freed from the oath she took, for the pope's letter has no power, when he no longer possesses the right, to absolve us." This is the opinion of our

worthy father, Reinhold; also that of the learned dean of the cathedral, Herdan; and your uncle insists upon the same. Even Father Johannes, who would do any thing for your advantage, does not venture to question it. I see no way to relieve myself from the anxiety which I suffer, but that the dean has already expressed his willingness to appeal to the bishop's court."

"Not yet, my father," interrupted Dagobert, calmly, "the worthy man may spare himself this trouble, and you no less the desire, which I can plainly perceive you feel, to make known your design, without giving me pain. Neither you, nor Herdan, nor Reinhold, nor even my uncle—the main spring of this proceeding on the part of the church—not one of them can give me a moment's anxiety; but your words I feel deeply—in my very soul. Yes, my father, I will assume the cowl—I will myself entreat the bishop to consecrate me—it is said, and it shall be done."

"Do I hear aright, my son," exclaimed the father, transported with joy, "is that possible—so soon? Can you really do it? I know you are no common man, and can emulate the saint

who there from on high beholds his likeness,  
and looks on us and smiles."

Dagobert bent his eye upon the picture of St. George, which stood before him, in all its imposing form and colour, as if animated with life. He had not been conscious of its vicinity, and he coloured deeply. He then turned and addressed himself to Margaret:—"Honoured lady, it was your command created that picture, and I now ask your forgiveness from my heart. I imagined, that having left this house, you would think unkindly of me. You also, my father, value far too highly my poor services and deserts. Alas, I am no saint, nor do I aspire to the title; but I would be a man, and an obedient son. Let the past and the present be forgotten. Early, to-morrow, I will speak with father Johannes about this business, or with Reinhold, if you please."

"Go, where your own good heart directs you," replied Diether; "thy angel mother will bless thee from on high, and the good priest Johannes strengthen thy good resolves. I go to rejoice the dean and father Reinhold with tidings of thy noble and free-hearted purpose. Then, in the monastery, another duty calls my attend-

ance. The monk who brought me tidings of Wallrade is recovered, and I must give him thanks. Reinhold, who attended him in his illness, assures me that he is no priest, but a man of noble descent, which he gathered from his own lips during the delirium in his illness. Whether misfortune, however, or some vow, led him to assume the cowl, I will reward him as far as lies in my power, for to him I owe the intelligence last received of Wallrade."

"Wallrade!" the unhappy, the lost one!" cried Dagobert, in a voice of pity, "where is she now? Not here, I am sure; for here, at length, peace has taken up her abode."

"Yes, truly," returned Diether, affectionately embracing his wife. "That bold journey to Baunstein, has vindicated my Margaret—the scales are dropt from my eyes. See how she caresses that boy who had so nearly been lost to us through an ungrateful daughter. Ha! could I even pass over her other delinquency—had she flown to the arms of an honest man—I still could not forgive her treachery. I will see her no more—hear not a word spoken—while we do all to protect the unhappy child. Let her learn how to repent in the house of refuge to

which she has flown—let her learn to feel what others have felt. I have done with her!"

"Alas! my dear Sir," murmured Margaret, "try to command this violent feeling. Think into what grief your severity would have plunged us, without God's help; then think of her."

"See there!" cried Diether, exultingly; "see, Dagobert, how the injured angel prays for her by whom she was betrayed. I read the same wishes in your eyes; but that I may not relent, I must withdraw from the influence of your example till I become cool and collected."

He instantly left the room, and Dagobert, shaking his head, observed, "My father is much to be pitied for his extreme fickleness of temper. In one hour, he is full of suspicion and enmity; in the next, quite overjoyed, and reposing confidence in all. It takes a good pilot to run through so rough a sea as lies before us. Your little skiff, my mother, goes near to founder on a rock. Speak to me, honoured lady; do not persist in false silence, but declare the whole truth: from all I yet hear, my father knows not of little Hans!—and must I entreat you so much in vain. Shall I, then, speak for you?"

"Father Reinhold advised me to keep silence," replied Margaret, anxiously.

"His prudence," interrupted Dagobert, "seeks disguise under your falsehood—the same lie by which he saved your reputation—but the lightning stroke which would blast you, would go harmless by him, were my father to learn from other lips what has happened. You once loved me dearly; you love me yet, I think. Give me, then, such proofs of your regard as may prove of service to yourself. Do it soon, for time presses; and every day—any day—may bring your destruction. Consider well, and give me leave to return—and to find you decided upon this."

A short time before Dagobert's departure from his father's house, in order to attend upon his respected teacher, Johannes, the Baron von der Rhön, having recovered from his severe illness, had left the monastery, eager to breathe the fresh air, and to consider more maturely what course to adopt in his strange situation. While confined to his sick chamber, he had heard that Diether's daughter had returned from her captivity, and that the robber, Bechtram, had met his fate. Commiserating the unhappy father,

he bent his steps towards the elder's dwelling. He approached cautiously, and glanced up at the windows, with the hope of catching the eye of Wallrade ; and learning from her where his boy—the only tie that bound him to earth—now was. Something whispered to him to take heed how he again confided in the artful creature, now become his enemy ; and who, having recovered her liberty, he dreaded might renew her persecution. Still, like some drowning wretch, in a sea of troubles, he snatched at straws ; and even longed to behold again the features of his hated foe. His endeavours, however, were vain. He saw the windows of the mansion open, to admit the fresh air into the melancholy place ; but no where was the form of Wallrade to be discerned. Only one kindly countenance—that of Margaret—was to be seen, as she, from time to time, passed before his eyes. Not having confidence to enter, uninvited, into the house, or to meet the eye of the father and the daughter, he drew a deep sigh, and turned reluctantly away, without any fixed purpose what course to pursue. He turned towards the huts, where wretched mendicants pursue their shameless trade, and abandoned

characters invite passengers into their snares—meaning thence to take his way towards the river, whose waves had engulfed his unfortunate wife and child. As he was indulging his melancholy feelings, a young beggar girl, with a child in her arms, passed by, and made her humble obeisance, at sight of the monk's dress. She came close to him, in going through a narrow path, when, casting his eyes upon the child, a thought flashed through his brain, and he exclaimed, “Rudolf!—Yes, this child—is it not thine.” He commanded the girl to stop; he seemed to recognise her features. “Who art thou, maiden?” he stammered out, as he clasped her hands. “Who art thou, unhappy one, and whose is this child?”

In his sudden emotion, the cowl had fallen from his head, and his features were displayed, while the terrified maiden shrieked out, “Heaven help us!—Baron von der Rhön!—can it be you? O, what joy!”

“Speak,” cried the baron; “whose is this infant?”

“It is your's,” replied Gundel, throwing herself upon her knees before him, “O, forgive me, I knew not you were at Franckfort. I took

alarm—I fled the horrors of a prison. I have supported myself and this child by alms until the lady Wallrade should return."

"Wallrade!" exclaimed the father, as he took the babe in his arms, which, alarmed at his coarse dress and haggard features, no longer knew him. "Wallrade!" he continued, "what a light breaks in upon me—she informed me the child was dead."

"Dead!" repeated the girl. "Dead! no, dear sir?"

"And the child's mother," he inquired.

"She, too, yet lives," replied Gundel.

"Monster of wickedness!" cried the baron, with deep emotion; "base, treacherous, Wallrade! Where then is my wife? Speak, girl, speak, I say."

"I swear I know not," replied Gundel, sobbing and wringing her hands; "I wish I did, I would restore this infant to her. Wallrade is indeed a wretch, and I regret, in bitterness of heart, that I know any thing respecting her. Your son, sir—"

"Of my son, hereafter," interrupted the baron; "let us speak of that most vile of women. Where shall I find her?"

"I learnt her place of abode for the first time yesterday. The abbess of the Magdalens is her friend, and she there dwells in the house of the white women."

"The devil ! in the house of the Magdalens say you," with anger glaring in his eyes, "if I can only find—only once reach her !" With these words he clasped the child closer to his breast, and breaking through the throng of persons already gathered round, rushed with furious haste towards the place described.

"In the name of God," cried Gundel, hastening after him, "will you rush upon destruction. Oh, sir, sir, hear me."

But it was too late ; he redoubled his speed, and soon reached Wallrade's retreat. Unfortunately, as he approached the gates he met her, accompanied by a single person, and starting like an apparition before her view, he exclaimed, as she shrank from his grasp, and clung to her companion—"Welcome, monster of iniquity, I have thee. Know'st thou this child ? know'st thou me ? liar and traitress as thou art—shalt thou longer pursue thy murderous career ? Where is the mother of this child ? "

"God of mercy !" exclaimed Wallrade's

companion, while the latter cried out, "Come along Willhild, and see me safe from this madman."

"Where is this child's mother?" again thundered the baron, as he thrust her back with his clenched hands—"drowned, eh? It is a lie! Confess it, or fear the worst, thou hell-born traitress!"

"The maif will murder me," cried Wallrade, turning pale as death. "Willhild, help, help me."

"Murder thee! yes, by heavens," thundered Bilger, "thy last hour is come, if thou will not confess."

The anger that flashed from his eye startled the persons who had run to her assistance, and hearing her cries, and all drew back. With the spring of a tiger he seized upon the weapon of one of the assistants, and having dispersed the rest, was about to seize the terrified Wallrade, when a youth, guided by Gundel, burst his way through the throng to her assistance. It was Dagobert.

"Help, pity me, my brother!" cried his wretched sister, hastening towards him. But it was too late.

" Still silent," exclaimed Bilger, as he aimed a blow at her with the sword, which cast her struggling upon the ground, " thou wilt have it then ! "

" Murder!" shouted the people, as they drew back from the enraged man; " Who is the murderer? Who art thou?" " Yes, who art thou?" repeated Dagobert, as he left the fainting Willhild and Gundel, and approached the assassin, who, at the sight of the blood he had spilt, stood amazed and rooted to the spot. He returned no answer, when Dagobert, suddenly recognizing him, exclaimed, " Do I see aright! Baron Von der Rhön! Unhappy man, what have you done? "

" Kill me; death! death!" cried Bilger, " as the weapon fell from his grasp—give me death from your hand."

" No, God forbid!" replied Dagobert, " here is an officer—your blood shall not be upon my head! Fly! instantly fly!" and the words were repeated by all present.

" Whither, whither?" returned the despairing man, in whom the love of life for a moment prevailed.

" Fly to the German huts," whispered Dago-

bert, at the same time urging him gently through the crowd, that made an opening for him on all sides.

"But will you save my child?" he inquired, which he had already placed in Dagobert's arms. With these words he fled, some of the people crying out, "Let him go; let him go; he is a wretched man!" while others said, "Seize him, where is the officer?—to prison with him!" This was followed by showers of stones and other missiles; but the unhappy wretch still held on his way. On approaching the ferry, however, the soldiers stopped his progress, and two of them seizing him, bound his hands. He now seemed lost, when a number of people from the adjacent sanctuary of the huts, made their appearance, and surprising his guards, boldly took the prisoner's part, and rescued him in a moment.

"He is no monk; he is an impostor!" exclaimed one of the officers, "deliver him over to justice. Come, who are you—confess?"

"I will confess only to this knight, who has been foremost in achieving my rescue—let the rest retire."

Upon being left alone with his deliverer,

Bilger asked him to fix his eyes steadfastly upon his features, at the same time drawing his cowl back and displaying his person to view. The knight looked doubtfully for a moment, and then, as if some painful recollections came over him, he frowned, and his face grew dark.

"On my oath," he at last begun, "do I see right? Can it be?—that beard—those haggard features! Are you Rudolph Bilger?"

"Yes, I am he," answered the unfortunate man, "and I see, by your wrinkled forehead, that I shall no longer have your protection. I slew Wallrade!"

The old man became pale as death, and leaning against the window for support, exclaimed, in a voice scarcely audible, "You slew Wallrade?" He pressed his hand upon his eyes, and then withdrew it; the red mark of his fingers was seen; his eyes wandered wildly about, and his lips had a haughty expression as he exclaimed, "Welcome, Von der Rhön," at the same time stretching out his hand to the astonished Bilger! "Rest assured of my protection—Saint George did not a better deed when he slew the dragon, than you have done in sending this devil to her home."

"Do I hear aright?" said Rudolph.

"Think as you will," answered the other, "I am become wiser than when we last met. I have wild blood in me—the sabre of a cursed Pole reached me in battle; behold this scar—but my wildness equalled not the baseness of that woman. When my wound was healed I returned home to my family, while every one believed me to have been long dead. What did I not hear of Wallrade? She had been the object of my passion, she was now that of hate, and she might have lived a thousand years without my seeing her again. Well it was that she died by your hand. But what has become of your Johannes?"

"You open my wounds afresh," said Bilger, who proceeded to relate the history of his misfortunes. "Oh, I am a miserable creature!" exclaimed the unfortunate man, with a despairing look, "who in the greatest suffering has not a tear left to moisten my burning eyes. No language can describe my tortures. My conscience is full of sin. Could I obtain forgiveness for my deed of blood, yet there is the impious crime of the double marriage. Oh, who can free me from this labyrinth of guilt?"

His companion looked from under his bushy eyebrows, and said, " Think not so gloomily, I will do you all the good in my power. I cannot restore to you your wife and child ; nor can I secure your neck from the sword of the Franckforters, but I can help you to pass your time pleasantly, and you may hope for some miracle or prodigy to do something in your favour. Be a man again ; throw every thing behind you, and smooth your brow. We of this house are no whining hypocrites, and love the table, wine, and a joke. Come, be gay with the gay. Four weeks are an eternity for the blue devils. Your misery does you no good, therefore cast it away, and let heaven provide for the future."

## CHAPTER VIII.

WHILST the mob assembled and besieged the doors of the German nobles, the soldiers of the council were summoned and stood on the watch together, with many of the people, before the gate of the cloister, into which Wallrade had been borne bloody and fainting, and altogether like a corpse. The news of this circumstance had flown like lightning through the city, and had already reached Diether's house. The old citizen was from home at the time, but Margaret, forgetting her enmity, and listening only to the voice of pity and womanly tenderness, which spoke forcibly in her bosom, flew on the wings of terror and anguish to the convent, hoping to see Wallrade before she expired, and to soothe her sufferings by the voice of consolation. The cell into which the unfor-

tunate woman had been received, was filled with men. Around the blood-stained bed stood the serving sisters of the convent. Gundel knelt at the head, weeping, and praying to heaven that she might not be taxed with the death of her mistress. At the feet lay Willhild, praying in a low tone, and with almost motionless lips. The head of the convent, the proud Walburg, the intimate friend of Wallrade, was examining with her hands and eyes the wounds of the sufferer; and Judith, the maid, was assisting her in the melancholy office. Dagobert stood in the corner, with the little Agnes in his arms, bending his pale and sorrowful looks upon his miserable sister, against whom every emotion of anger had now vanished. Her sufferings had completely softened him, and he gradually extended his hand to Margaret as she approached.

"Heaven reward your benevolence, noble woman," said he; "you scorn not to seek one who is humbled to the dust, to speak comfort to her. I see it in your heavenly countenance. But I fear you come too late. Yet . . ." He sat down, and beckoned to Willhild, "it is enough to see this woman here." Margaret,

became pale and agitated when she saw that terrible woman so near her. With a scarcely audible and trembling voice, she explained the motives which had brought her there.

"O, beloved lady!" exclaimed Willhild, "I have learnt that there is nothing better than truth. Know, then, that she who there expires, by deceit and cunning, enticed me from the truth. Terrified that I had disclosed to your step-daughter, under the pressure of sickness, and tempted by my blood-thirsty husband, what I should have kept secret, I feared to see you; and when my Paul came home, and it was told him that your husband knew all, I was fearfully punished for my offence. Anguish had taken possession of me, and my heart sought to find forgiveness of my sins at Compostella. But I was sent back from a convent on the borders of Alsace. The prior gave me every aid for performing a longer pilgrimage, if I should not return home, and held out the hope of forgiveness. Leaving my husband behind, I returned, and reached here to-day. How little did I expect to meet you whom I betrayed? I expected to find an assistant in Wallrade, whom, to my misfortune, I met by chance in the street. Her

joy at seeing me was without bounds. So, now, all my slanderers shall suffer," said she, maliciously, "I have here the best witness that could be found, and out of the house shall go the woman and the brat. Come, Willhild, be bold and resolute, and you shall come to no harm! I now saw well that I had no help against the unjust and cunning forger. Full of dismay as to what was to happen, I followed your step-daughter till we met the frantic monk."

"And what think you now to do?" asked Margaret, searchingly.

"I must inform the noble Diether of every thing," answered Willhild. "They directed me so at the convent. But I have agitated you, and will leave you, if you desire it."

Dagobert made a sign to Margaret, which was immediately understood. "I desire you," said she to Willhild, who had approached the bed of Wallrade—"blessed be the Lord," exclaimed Walburg at the same moment, "the unfortunate still lives, and the wounds seem curable." All pressed towards the couch to watch the first signs of returning life; but the sufferer closed her eyes when they met those of Margaret, and

shame cast a transitory tinge of red over her pale and deathly countenance. "Wherefore am I not dead?" her lips murmured. "Wherefore is she still before mine eyes?"

The abbess, in order to stop the prying curiosity of the spectators, removed the women of the convent to a distance. Among them, or rather after them, went Judith, who now remembered to carry some food to the poor lady, whom she had forgotten during the murderous fray, and who was confined in the convent as a lunatic. "Be not angry," said she, as gently, as she could, and endeavouring to lessen the fierceness of her eyes by kindly feeling, "be not angry, dear lady, I am an unworthy, forgetful thing, whose hand is every where wanted, and therefore always doing harm to some one or another. I am grieved that you have been kept fasting, but forgive me."

"Ah, thou art a good creature!" answered Catharine, in a melancholy, but friendly tone, yet retaining the thoughtful position in which Judith had found her. "I thank you for your thought of me, but I hunger not. How should I in my misery remember that I am a woman who thinks to live

any longer? Tell me, dear, good Judith, has our lady yet inquired after me—has no child been yet sent me to embrace?"

Judith answered in the negative, smiling sorrowfully, as if the speaker's mind was wandering.

"That is sad," said Catharine, continuing, her head sinking upon her hand, while tears filled her eyes. "See Judith, what will make me mad, though I am not so; and yet she gave me such a strong and sacred promise?" Catharine sat down, still speaking to herself, "and she remains absent with my child."

"Eat, dear lady," said Judith, "may it please the Lord to restore health to your body and light to your soul."

"Leave me," answered Catharine, angrily. "Do you, too, indeed believe that I am mad? Let the world speak. There is a worse suffering in my mind; and if I only dare tell them who I am, and what is my name; and if any friend came and saw how I am treated, even as a wild beast, all would be then changed. But when will that be? Where are they, my beloved?"

"Dry your tears, lady," said Judith, affectionately, "the water of the eye helps us

neither from what we see, nor to what we have lost."

"Lost!" replied Catharine, hastily, "in truth thou hast spoken right. It is lost—and never, ah never, comes the lost again. Yet believe me . . ." she stopped, and remained for some moments absorbed in silent melancholy. "Yet believe me, I am not mad;—say so to the noble lady Walburg; but I cannot tell how long my brain will remain unturned, if I be left alone with my pain, and my untold misery. Tell me now, my good girl, how comes it to pass that you have been so long absent to-day?"

Judith related what had happened, but cautiously, to avoid affecting the mind of her listener too strongly. Catharine asked the name of the wounded person, and Judith saw no necessity for concealing it. She had no sooner mentioned it, however, than the miserable lady, as if all the flames of passion had burst forth in her heart, started up so wildly, that even the strong-minded Judith shrunk back in terror. "Wallrade!" cried she, "Wallrade! O bitter, bitter deception! Has she lived under this roof, and left me in prison!—By your command do I lie here in chains! O may

the most terrible sorrows of my miserable life fall upon her head. Yet no, no!"—She sat down, and continued. "Has she, then, not already felt the justice of God? Lies she not as a lopped branch? Curse her not, Catharine; nor curse thy husband, whose mind this snake has poisoned to murder thy repose! Ah! what a vision rises in my mind at the thoughts of my husband! Judith, Judith! be-think thee of the grief of a mother! But if thy hard fate, and thy stern will, hath withheld from thee the joys of a mother, yet thou art a woman; yet thou knowest the joys and sorrows of a woman: help me, then, out of this dungeon; help me out, that I may speak with her who is dying—I must see her—I must speak with her."

"Good lady," answered Judith, who yet considered Catharine insane, and her expressions as the consequence of her illness, "repose yourself. I may not do what you desire; and, moreover, it is already too late. Wallrade, I am sure, no longer lives."

"Merciful God!" shrieked Catharine, in agony. "She lives not? What sayest thou, wretch? That cannot be: she dares not die!"

She cannot die ! She must tell me where my child is. I am the mother of Agnes ! She dare not conceal it from me ! O, in God's name, Judith, Judith, lead me to her death-bed ! ”

Judith sought, as she had often done before, to repress the passion of the unfortunate lady by her stock of texts from Scripture, which had sometimes acted like a talisman ; but they were now employed in vain, and her pity, and the suspicion that true misery rather than madness, inspired some part of the sufferer's words, prevented her from using force. She was, therefore, on the point of locking her up and leaving her, when the entrance of Walburg freed her from the painful necessity. The visage of the strong, inflexible woman was gloomy, and bore the marks of some ungracious design. She walked slowly up to Catharine, who, fainting with fear and suffering, sought in vain for words to repeat to her what she had already said to the maid.

“ I am either wickedly deceived,” said the abbess, “ or the wounded woman speaks under the influence of fever. Can it be true that you possess your reason ? that you are not phrenzied from the death of a child ? ”

" My child lives ! " cried Catharine. " Noble lady, for heaven's mercy, say that my child lives ! say but that, and I will forgive from my heart whatever evil you have done me. I was deceived. You are a weak human being like myself. Satan overcame you. I pardon you—only say not to me that my child is dead. They have not yet murdered it, the barbarous ones ? Say not ' yes,' noble lady. The father of the child has driven it into exile—he has not murdered his little daughter."

" No ! no ! worthy lady," answered Walburg, confidently, " the child lives ; I will even show it you—lay it in your arms—since this motherly anxiety is not madness ; and I fear I have sinned heavily against you. Come with me, poor lady, and bring a forgiving heart to the dying woman, that she may rise to heaven in the midst of her repentance instead of her sins."

Without answering a word, but quickly as a lioness, who, returning to her lair, finds her young gone, and rushes forth on the track of the spoiler, Catharine followed the abbess, while Judith murmured behind, " O, ye children of men, turn and repent ; for ye know not when

the hour is, and ye need neither signs, nor wonders, nor prophecies. What would I not do that the criminal might die in the bosom of repentance? Vain wish! Merciful is the Lord, and he can do all things, whatsoever he pleases, and all things rest on his hand. Therefore poured he repentance upon my parents, and punished their murder as it deserved. If the prayer of a daughter can ascend to him, then will this prayer be answered."

With a merciful and forgiving heart, supported by Walburg, Catharine proceeded to Wallrade's cell; but she only cast a painful look on the dying woman, who was just recovered from a swoon, and flew to the little Agnes, who was laughing and smiling in the arms of Dagobert. The delighted and over-powered mother had no thought but of her child, which she took into a corner of the cell, where she kissed and hugged it, and put a thousand questions to the little babbler, forgetting every thing else around her. Wallrade, who was now recovered from her fainting fit, was well pleased not to be addressed by the person whom she had so deeply injured, and she con-

tinued the confession which she had begun making, to Margaret, and which had been interrupted by her swooning.

"It is hard," she said, in a feeble voice, "that I can see about me only persons whom I have injured. That murderous sword has made a fearful passage for repentance in my bosom, and your presence and gentleness, Margaret, are my sole medicine. Those whom I most hated stand by me—all others have forsaken me. Let me conclude: let me commend to your care the child whom I thrust out, bringing evil to your house—the innocent child! I had not a mother's heart—I loved not the infant, whose father I hated. I resolved that he who had forsaken me should have no pleasure in him. I misused the boy because he was the image of his father. I sent him out into the world. Gundel and Rudiger were witnessess to my conduct; but the child himself is the best, for he is your little Johannes." Margaret clasped her hands in silent astonishment. "Let him not suffer for the crime of his mother," cried Wallrade; "cast him not from you, as I did. Dagobert—be you his protector. And oh! my father will not altogether forget him; for he has

loved me, unworthy as I am, though his anger now prevents his coming to my death-bed. Dagobert! take care of little Hans!—promise me you will!"

"I promise you," answered Dagobert, pressing her hand, "that I will always prove myself the friend and uncle of the boy; I will never forsake him, and he shall be as my own child."

"That cheers the gloom of this death," sighed Wallrade; then raising her voice a little, she continued, "O, my kind and beloved friends, would that I could hope to make reparation for the injuries I have done you! In vain will you seek for the cross on the face of your little son. The pain which Willhild suffered, as the punishment of her imprudence, brought a guilt upon her which drew after it every other. Johannes died not by her."

"Died not!" cried Margaret, vehemently, bending towards the speaker. "Have I heard aright? Johannes died not! In the name of heaven, Willhild, what does this mean?"

Willhild trembled violently, and covered her face with the bed-clothes; Wallrade sought in vain to speak; Dagobert briefly finished her imperfect confession. "Radiger, the servant,"

said he, "declared to me, whom dying, what he had disclosed to the husband of Willhild, the half-guilty Paul: the boy was very ill, and near dying, when some necessary business one day called Willhild and Paul from the hut. The unusual glimpse of fine weather, in that late season of the autumn, induced them to take the child out, instead of leaving him locked up in the house as usual. They left him to play about the meadow and little garden, and when they went into the fields, he was lying in the sunshine, on a little bank under a hedge, sleeping from weakness. They looked on his pale countenance; they hesitated for a moment whether they should leave him, but throwing a handkerchief over his face, they went their way. When they returned, he was no longer there, nor could they find him, either in the field, the garden, or the house; and to this day they have never been able to gain any tidings of him."

Dagobert ceased, and the miserable mother exclaimed, "O, how this relation renew my sufferings! How doubly do I now feel the loss of my only love! Till now I believed him in the cold earth, in a holy, Christian grave. Now

I have to fear that some wild beast from the woods tore his tender body to pieces. His bones are the sport of the birds, and are scattered over the ground. Willhild! Willhild! What hast thou upon thy conscience? Is it true what I hear?"

Willhild pressed her forehead against the bed, and wept aloud. Wallrade corroborated what had been said, by signs, and clasped her hands, as if to pray for the forgiveness of the penitent woman.

"It has been long concealed in my breast," said Dagobert; "and I could not resolve to make it known, but human misfortune spares nothing. Place your trust on God, good mother, that as you retain no enmity against this poor woman, he will have mercy on your soul."

"Then I die easy," said Wallrade, whose strength had returned; "among the forgiving I forgive, and take all guilt from my murderer, the unhappy Von der Rhön."

"Von der Rhön!" exclaimed Catherine, suddenly ceasing to fondle the child, "What of him? Wallrade, I conjure you, by the mercy of heaven—by your hope of salvation—where is

he whose name you have pronounced? What shall I believe? What shall I hear? Speak—only one word—where is my husband—what has happened to him?"

Wallrade raised her eyes to heaven, and looked inquiringly at the abbess, who whispered in her ear, "Be silent! Let me reply, lest the fearful truth prove her instant death."

"Your husband lives," continued she, aloud, to the anxious hearer." Yet more; you will see him; but be prepared, for you will not find him in the midst of happiness."

"Of happiness!" returned Catherine, eagerly. "Oh, lady—how should he be happy without her—her who loves him? Oh! however he may be worn down by poverty or sickness, the sight of me—the sight of his child, will be welcome to him. I will comfort him; I will help to support him. O God! I will do any thing—suffer any thing—bear hunger and pain with him, if I can only see him, be near him. O I love him as no one else ever can, or ever did love him."

Wallrade shrunk painfully within herself, and Walburg said, "Let us cast a veil over the past, good lady, and rejoice that there is one

over the future. Be content that you shall see your husband—perhaps to-morrow morning—perhaps even this evening. But compose yourself in the meantime, and go to your cell with your child. I shall keep my word, and endeavour to repair the injury I have done you. Offer up a pater noster, and a supplication for the unfortunate and dying sinner!"

Dagobert thought, as he looked in his sister's face, that she was already dead, but Margaret's ear caught her low and almost inaudible breathing, and motioned for all to be silent. The slumber, however, into which the sufferer had fallen seemed to every one as the torpor in which the soul often escapes from the body. Catharine departed with her little Agnes in the hope of soon seeing her husband; Walburg remained praying by the side of her friend, and Dagobert sat watching near her. Margaret, after listening for some time, whispered to Dagobert—

"Stay here, my good son, I cannot see her die; I go to fulfil my too long neglected duty of telling Diether what has occurred. Woe to me, that my weak failing mind has delayed the avowal so long, and until necessity compels me. Come,

Willhild, come, we must leave the death-bed.  
My place is now at the feet of my lord!"

"God be with you," said Dagobert, joyfully; "there will be light again in our house, and we have only to weep that it must here be night while the day springs there; go with confidence. I fear I shall soon be able to follow you." He looked anxiously at the countenance of Wallrade, who was breathing hard. Margaret wiped the tears from her eyes, and placed a large cross by the sufferer. Willhild raised herself, sighing, from the earth, sprinkled the bed with a little holy water, and followed the quick steps of her mistress. So silently they passed on, so silently they entered the house, that Diether, sunk in melancholy, was not aware of their approach. He paid no attention to the trembling form of Willhild, but, said to Margaret, with a tremulous voice, "Come you from her? Is it all over?" His wife shook her head, and, concealing her pain as well as she could, replied, "She lives yet, sir, and hopes to see you by her bed, a forgiving father!"

"Does not her death break my heart?" said Diether, full of anguish. "Is she not my daughter? I am not a wild beast of the forest

that would devour the bones of its young ; I am a man, an old austere man, but not utterly without feeling. It would be a sacred duty in me to stand by the bed of my dying child, could I again see with right and unmixed feelings. But anger would contend with mercy ; hate with reconciliation ; cursing with blessing ; and better is it that I should keep away, than that in her last hour I should remember what she has committed against me—against us all."

Margaret would have replied, but Diether prevented her. "No attempt to exculpate her," said he, harshly ; "I can forgive her—I will bless her. But I will not convey that word of forgiveness to her—I will not lay my hand upon her head, nor forget that it was she who brought all our misery upon us, and took from us the child to cast it helpless into the world, like a poor blind whelp into the torrent.

"Oh, my lord," cried Margaret, embracing his knees, "repress your anger, repress your indignation. Wallrade has sinned much, but she is innocent in regard to this crime."

"Innocent!" exclaimed Diether, and with surprise saw Willhild cast herself before him, bemoaning, and bringing facts to light of which he

had never dreamed. The confused history was gradually unravelled, and he learnt how the vile imposture had in the beginning operated against his peace. As it drew near the conclusion, his rage returned, the blood rushed forcibly into his heart, and he was on the point of venting his passion on the suppliant at his feet. But as his eye glanced upon her, she appeared more beautiful in her penitence than when she had first entered his house, a blooming bride, and his feelings underwent a sudden revulsion. A circle of pitying angels seemed to surround her, and bend before the old man on their knees, lifting their hands towards him, and fanning his stormy soul into peace with their bright and golden wings. The charm wrought its full effect; returning love was too strong for anger; and all his gentler feelings were elevated by the inspiration of an eternal, unchanging providence. His wrath suddenly ceased; a melancholy smile stole over his countenance; and the hand which was just before lifted to push her from him, was now extended to raise her as a father the child whom he loves.

“Rise, my wife,” said he, gently, and struggling with emotion; “you have so much to for-

give me, that I cannot do otherwise than forgive you. Let us speak no more of what is past." He pressed Margaret's hand affectionately, and as he held it, she expressed her joy and gratitude, by implanting many kisses on his, which were only interrupted by the sobs which escaped from her bosom. Diether raised her from the ground, and said with some severity to her companion, "to thee could I say, 'Where is the child, which I trusted to thee?' But I restrain myself. 'The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' The poor, sick, dying babe will surely be no more seen by us, nor shall we ever find his remains. The house, however, is not without an heir, and the little Hans\* shall not be unhappy, because of the errors of his mother. But let us go to the death-bed of my penitent daughter, that I may now bless her with a softer spirit, and seal her peace with a full and reconciled heart."

\* It ought to have been before stated, that Hans is a contraction of Johannes. Ed.

## CHAPTER IX.

ENJOYING the beams of a fine setting sun, sat Bilger von der Rhön at the window of his solitary chamber, which commanded a view of the rapid flowing river below, on whose surface glided the vessels and small skiffs, casting their shadows upon hill and dale as they passed. But the picture of fresh and joyous life before him failed to revive the heart of the spectator; it only made his reflections more painful, to know that he had been driven from among the people with the loss of freedom, of honour, and as it might soon prove, of life itself. The prospect before him grew darker and darker; the path behind him had not been strewn with flowers, while, through the dangers of the present and the future, his imagination pictured the forms of his beloved, as they seemed, like beatified beings, to stretch forth their arms towards the father and the friend in vain—they could not save—could not bring

him to themselves. Amidst his bitter feelings, it often occurred to the despairing man to put an end to his woes, and consign them, with himself, to a watery grave. The German nobles of that period, whether knights, laymen, or clergy, carried the ideas of their own wealth, power, and importance, to the most extravagant pitch, and the love of pleasure, grasping avarice, and violence, were the characteristic features of the largest portion of the order, who, if not loved were feared by the people, and they on all sides left fearful evidence of their arbitrary sway. In the list of these overbearing and violent men, the Lord of Issen held a prominent rank. He was considered one of the bravest in the field; to his valour he owed his high military office; while in peace he was one of the most haughty and unyielding; opposed every popular measure, and scrupled not to trample on the rights and property of others. Still he was not by nature a cruel and heartless man: he had at times better feelings: he had a good-natured roughness in his manners, and only became severe and ungovernable when checked or opposed in his career. Passionately devoted to women, he suffered no considera-

tions to act as a bar to his pleasures ; and at the social board his voice was loudest in promoting mirth, while he circulated the wine-cup with unceasing alacrity along with the song and the jest. The domestic chaplain was also a stout bacchanalian, and required little persuasion to enlist under the baron's colours : while the major-domo, a thorough-paced rogue, full of avarice and cunning, was not slow to second his knight-commander in every kind of dissipation, in the hope of deriving his own special advantages from the exercise of his office.

In the midst of such a brotherhood, it was impossible for any unfortunate wretch to pass his days in peace ; the loose and barbarous freedom of their manners bore like an iron weight upon the poor man's heart ; and Bilger often wished he were one of those needy wretches whom none cared about, and who were left to find food and shelter as they best could. The host, however, made it a matter of honour to show the utmost hospitality and friendship to his guest, bestowing upon him all those attentions which his name and station merited. He was thus compelled to sit at the table of these boon companions for hours, or steal away, like a thief, to his solitary apart-

ment, on the first opportunity, to indulge his griefs alone. His solitude was indeed painful ; but now, it seemed as if the sole property which remained to him, was the right of brooding over his sorrows. In his retirement he was unconscious of the rude harmony of the monks of the order, whose inebriated fervour expressed itself in hymns to the holy St. John, the patron of singers. He only listened to the agonized beatings of his own heart, and to the departed voices of past joys and hopes, which spoke a language he well understood. As the twilight gathered round him, he would sit alone and ponder till the entrance of his host, full of noisy turbulence, roused him from his lethargy, and recalled him to a sense of his real situation.

"Blood and thunder ! man," cried Herr von Issing ; " Von der Rhön ! what, in the devil's name, can prevail on you to sit in this lonely place, and fly the social board. Away with your croakings and wailings, my brave boy. See you not the stately forms of our old brother warriors there, on the walls, whose looks are enough to inspire you with courage ; see how grandly they turn their eyes upon you, as much as to say, ' Be of good cheer, brother ; we will

see you through all your troubles!" However, you must stick fast by the living; and so long as you fight under the shield of the cross, will the Emperor and the realm protect your body from all harm. Summon up your spirit then; and if our revels here are not altogether to your liking, speak out boldly, and we will try to find you something better to your mind."

" My lord," replied Randolph, earnestly, " my evil lot hath brought me under your protection; but you have no right, on that score, to make a mock of me and my sufferings. Recollect that from you alone springs the cause of all my unhappiness and loss of peace."

" Now, on my oath," said Von Issing, in a jeering tone, " it is a good joke to think of laying upon my shoulders the whole weight of your own folly, and the enormities of a bad wife; while, on my part, seeing your miserable condition, I gave myself no little credit for never dwelling upon it, much less making sport of you. So far from this, I have even now the satisfaction of bringing you good news. I have received intelligence from the convent of the White Nuns, that Wallrade is not dead; nay, she is expected to recover. Little as I think

the wretch deserves to live, the knowledge of her having as many lives as a cat, may not, perhaps, be disagreeable to you."

"Can it be true?" exclaimed Rudolph, eagerly, "Is she yet alive? Accept my thanks, Herr von Issing, for having eased my soul of that pang. It is not that I care much for my neck, but my conscience will be at rest. Thanks! Oh, thanks!—Could you only have brought me tidings of my child—of my wife—Oh, God!"—The unhappy man drooped his head upon his breast, his hands fell helpless by his side, and with a deep sigh he paused.

His host elevated his eyebrows, and said, "I know nothing of that, my friend; but perhaps the messenger from the cloister may be better informed, and he is still in the house. You can speak with him if you please, and you may rely upon him."

"Of a truth, I would willingly avoid the face of man," replied Von der Rhön; "but whether I now mention my name or not, is of no consequence. Wallrade, being yet alive, must already have suffered it to escape her lips—Gundel has betrayed me—Dagobert is a witness against me. I dare no longer hope to conceal myself

without a stain upon the honour of my house. Permit me, my lord, to see the man immediately."

"Willingly," replied Von Issing, at the same time striking his sword upon the stone floor of the great hall till it rang again; when the folding doors flew open, and a dazzling burst of light streamed upon their view.

The sudden blaze made Bilger close his eyes; but he as quickly opened them again, when a soft voice called upon his name, and he sprang forwards in a transport of joy as his eye met the very forms which his imagination had just conjured up in solitude entering the apartment behind the torch-bearer. They were no longer hovering round him like beings of another sphere—they were living and breathing mortals, who flew to meet his embrace. Their arms of love were clasped close around him, and whispered voices, sweet and well-remembered, uttered the words of "Husband and father—we are here—we are thine—thy wife—thy child—we are restored to thee!"

Rudolph's eyes, yet moist with the traces of recent grief, now streamed with tears of un-repressed delight. His wife, too, hung sobbing

upon his neck, and his little Agnes wept fond tears of sympathy and emotion. In the entrance stood Judith, deeply affected at the sight, and in the centre of the hall the host himself, whose rude harsh spirit acknowledged the appeal of humanity and truth. The happy actors in this scene, lost to the presence of spectators, were occupied by mutual inquiries, and spoke in a language of animated delight that went from the lips to the heart.

“Alas!” at length exclaimed Rudolph, when he found that Catharine was acquainted with his first marriage, though not with the name of his wife, nor the existence of the boy Johannes. This indeed was a bitter drop in the cup of his joy, and it smote him with the weight of a deep sin; he did not deny it, although Catharine anxiously expected him to do so, and would sooner have believed a word from his lips than oaths from those of Wallrade, of whose shameless falsehoods she was now aware. As he bent before her, and entreated forgiveness with a full heart, he heard not the repreaches of an injured woman, but the tender solace of an angel. She forgave, and conjured him never more to leave the side of Agnes and herself. “Who-

ever it be—she who draws you from us loves you not as I love—never has loved you: she must have made you unhappy, for you cannot erase the images of others whom you love better from your heart—though—" and she paused and sighed—" though thou hast gone from us—from me and thy little daughter." Catharine sobbed, and was silent—she stooped her head on the child's neck to hide her tears.

The Herr von der Rhön, exclaimed, in deep emotion, as he grasped the hand of his host—" See, sir, oh, see what a wife is there! I fear me your eyes have been often attracted to external beauty; but now you may judge what true love, virtue, and devotion can achieve in behalf of the object beloved. Woe to me, that I ever troubled so pure a heart—yea, that I yet continue to heap ignominy upon this innocent head. And woe to you, Von Lessing, that you ever persuaded me to that other abhorred connection. Oh! would that I had never seen the hour in which I gave my assent; would that I had never beheld the face of that monk whom you brought to me, whose blessing—the bitter curse of my life—consigned this noble-minded creature to a

fate I cannot name, my child to illegitimacy, and me to a life of bondage—to the detested, unblest power of Wallrade."

"Wallrade!" shrieked Catharine aloud, as she sunk with excess of emotion on the ground, while Judith ran to her assistance, exclaiming, "Merciful God! she is dying;" and Rudolph would have thrown himself in agony at her feet; but Issing prevented him.

"Be a man," he exclaimed, "she is not dying; she hath only swooned; she will soon recover. Listen to me, and I will restore you from a much more serious lethargy, from the bondage of the abandoned wretch you complain of. Only listen to me. Wallrade subjected me to her will, and eager to complete her views upon you, and bind you by a stronger tie, prevailed upon me, in one of my weak moods, to lend her my assistance. I could not go back, though I felt the utmost torture. Oh! the idea of myself pronouncing a blessing on the heads of her I loved, and her hated lover. But my jealousy supplied me with an expedient. I wished to bind you; but only apparently so, that I might have you in my power; and thus the whole ceremony was conducted by a young

noviciate who had deserted his order, and only assumed, therefore, the functions of a regular monk."

"How?" stammered out Von der Rhön, starting back.

"Why," continued his host, "it was not my intention to have cleared up the matter, for I saw you were unhappy under the thraldom, and my object was achieved. Up to this time I have enjoyed the stratagem; and you have now to thank my own weak feelings, and the touching emotion of your beautiful wife, for an explanation. The pretended monk is gone to his last account."

"Can this be all true?" cried the delighted Bilger; "for never, if so, did the evil demon display his power of mischief more effectually than in this instance:—you have done me good—and by such means! My wife, my Catharine, rejoice with me. I am thine, thine only; thy honour is safe; and my child's heritage also! Let them drag me to execution, if they please, for the signal revenge which I sought upon my enemy my conscience at least is now free."

"I am a merciful father confessor," observed Von Issing; "and do you be wise, and take

care how you frighten your poor lady into fits again. She is just recovering; she is a stranger to your adventures yet; the lady abbess and Wallrade's friends have humanely concealed your horrible situation, that she might hear it more safely from your own lips."

At this declaration Van der Rhön uttered a cry of bitter anguish; for the worst was yet to come. Even the name of Wallrade had over-powered Catharine's fortitude; and what must be the effect of such a communication such as he was about to make? He must yet encounter the fearful future, haunted by the terrors of a deed of blood; he must avow his remorse to her he best loved, and who was now urgent for him to fly from his present abode with her and his child.

Who can sound the depths of a wife's and a mother's feelings! Catharine shuddered as she listened to the fearful tale of her husband's crime and of his danger. Yet she could not conceal from herself a sensation of strange joy when she thought of the retributive justice inflicted on the cause of all her sorrows by the arm of her injured husband. It might, perhaps, also excite remorse in the wretched Wallrade's mind; yet she saw the sword of justice suspended, as if by

a hair, over the head of him she loved. Bilger, also, who knew what he had to expect from the offended laws of the state, in particular as they applied to strangers, sought nevertheless to soothe the anxiety of his wife.

"Dear Catharine," he said, "let me first return thanks to heaven for the delight of having been again permitted to see you. I dare scarcely ask more; you are aware of the pursuit of justice; how its emissaries surround us on all sides; and they will draw their toils closer and closer, until I become their prey. A price is set upon my head; do not, therefore, deceive yourself; we have met, but we must soon part; it is so destined in heaven, and it must be fulfilled on earth."

"Woe to me! What say you, my Rudolph?" sighed Catharine, overpowered with emotion. "Will you deprive me of my last hope; will you despair of escape?"

"Why should I flatter you with false hopes," replied Von der Rhön; my sole wealth is garnered up in you. Gold and silver have I none, and where will the poor man find an advocate?"

Von Issing, who had till now been silent,

broke out into a contemptuous laugh, and exclaimed, "Blood and thunder! sir, you are a soldier; you have ridden over field and flood, and do you despair of rescue? You have yet time; and who knows but your deliverer is now standing at your side?"

Footsteps were heard quickly approaching the door of the hall, followed by loud voices—"Zounds!" cried the host; "who are intruding upon us at this hour?"

The reply to this was given by a horseman, who entered, booted and spurred, with a message from Duke Frederick of Austria—himself not far behind. Von der Rhön started at sight of the man, and put his hand over his eyes—for it was Dagobert who stood before him.

Scarcely bestowing a look upon the unhappy man and his wife, he approached the lord of the mansion:—"In the first place, noble sir, I have to inform you, that his Highness of Austria is near at hand, and counts upon your hospitable reception; he will be your guest during his sojourn at Franckfort."

"Honour and welcome!" replied the count; and forthwith directed Dagobert to give the

necessary orders to his steward to make due preparations. "I am much bounden to the princes of his house," continued the count; "but, noble sir, you are a stranger to me.—Your name?"

"My name," returned Dagobert, "hath no welcome sound to that man's ear," looking towards Bilger; "let him rest assured, however, that I come not hither as his enemy, but simply as the duke's *avant courier*, whom I fell in with this evening at some distance from this city, on a ride of pleasure. I am the Altburgher Diether's son—my name, Dagobert."

At this announcement, Von Issing bit his lips; but he soon resumed his usual air, and nodded a welcome.

Judith now availed herself of the opportunity afforded by a long pause, to whisper in Catharine's ear, that it was time to think of returning to the convent. Sighing deeply, the unhappy wife took Rudolph's arm; and returning thanks to the count, promised, if he would permit her, to return on the morrow. The count assented; in few instances, he said, laughing, had he refused the intreaties of fair ladies; he was not proof against beauty, and it was still less possible in this instance. Then changing

his tone, he added, with deep feeling—"God bless you, noble lady! and may he safely restore you to us! Come whenever you please. Here, at least, is a refuge for the persecuted; and it is honoured and hallowed by innocence like yours. Rely on meeting your husband again uninjured."

Von der Rhön then accompanied his lady to the gates, where she was joined by a torch-bearer and escort to guard her on her return.

Meanwhile, Dagobert, with bold and frank air, turned to the count, "Permit me, honoured sir, to say a few words that concern you. The citizens will not long leave you unmolested here: you are too stern and unyielding for them; and one only need look you in the face to see that it is true. Might I presume to offer you my advice—a good opportunity now occurs to show the sort of character you possess, and for a good purpose. It will do you a real honour. The unhappy being who is here under your protection—must he leave it to be consigned over to those from whom he with such difficulty escaped? Have you only afforded him a short respite, until the expiration of the truce consigns him into the hands of the executioner?

Save him and you will at once become the benefactor of three grateful beings."

With a smile, the count surveyed the form of the noble youth; in whose eyes sparkled the pure fire of an advocate for the wretched and oppressed.—“ I might well wonder at such words from your lips, young man, and set you down for a dangerous one to deal with—one who seeks to entrap at once my honour and my guest. You are Wallrade’s brother; and your first duty was to seek revenge, I should imagine.”

“ Whom do you take me for?” interrupted Dagober, warmly. “ Could I, think you, destroy a wretched man, who, in a fit of bitter passion, committed an act which he now as bitterly deplores ? Never, Sir, never ! and the affair, too, is very different to what it appears—Wallrade was yesterday pronounced out of danger; and her first wish was, that he who had attempted her life should be permitted to escape. Shall I, then, strive to inflict the extreme penalty of the law ; to trample upon humanity and mercy ? Know me better, my lord, and follow my example ! I learnt from the dying lips of Rudiger the part you have taken in the whole

affair: do not yield to the base suggestions of jealous revenge! Do not imitate the cruelty of the ferocious animal, that having its victim in its power, sports with ere it destroys it. Will you thus afford a glimpse of hope—a few moments' pause to your unhappy guest—and then consign him to the fangs of the law?"

The count gazed upon the speaker with a fiery glance. "By my soul, youth!" he cried, "you bear yourself loftily, though of a truth I dislike it not; but you take me in a wrong mood, to remind me of that other affair with Wallrade. Remember, too, that the Knight of Issing requires no adviser to urge him in the right way. His own will is enough; and know, proud stripling, that he had already determined on the step. For the sake of his wife and child, I had taken measures, with God's blessing, to rescue the unfortunate man. I am only bound to act according to the rules of my military order."

"Then the moment is arrived," replied Dagobert; "the Duke is at hand with his stout band, and the honest citizens may well tremble. The soldiers at their gates will tremble, too, before the numbers of the stranger, but more at

the prince's presence, who hates all lawyers and all bailiffs."

Dagobert then explained to the worthy host how the escape of Von der Rhön might be facilitated without danger to any one; and pressed him urgently to favour his designs.—The noise of horses and carriages was now heard in the court, while loud murmurs from the princely train broke on the stillness of the night, and filled the lonely building with hurry and confusion. The old man rose and proceeded to welcome the prince, while the court-yard was lit up with innumerable torches. Frederick entered the circle which awaited him with an affable smile, and advancing towards the elder's son and the knight of Issing, kindly saluted them.

Every thing presented the appearance of preparation for a festival as Dagobert set his foot on the threshold of his father's house;—old Diether met him with extended arms, and Margaret took a rich silver cup in her hand to welcome his arrival with a draught of their best wine. "O, my parents," said the young man, deeply moved at their affectionate em-

braces, which he as fondly returned, " how hard do you make it for me again to enter this house, to which I must so soon repeat my farewell ! The anniversary, however, of your marriage, and of my dear mother's birth-day, demand my presence, even though I am thereby obliged to resume for the time these unholy habits."

" A pure conscience is the holiest garment in the sight of the Lord," said the priest Johannes, as he drew near, leading Wallrade's little son by the hand. " A droll accident, good Dagobert, placed you in a cloister, where I saw you with regret, and I pray that some good angel may prevent you ever returning to it." The young man looked at him doubtfully, but Diether, taking his son by the arm, led him to a table round which the guests were ranged, when both men and women greeted him with delight, the former shaking him heartily by the hand, the latter nodding at him with looks expressive of pleasure. But his own eyes were fixed with wonder, when he found himself placed by his father between the Lady von Durning and her daughter. Both appeared

aware of his surprise, and evinced a feeling of confusion, though from a different cause.

" You are astonished," said the mother at length, " to meet us here, and I acknowledge that I feel some confusion at seeing you; but I now desire to speak without restraint, and I crave your forgiveness for the cruel injustice of which I was guilty in nourishing the suspicions which caused our separation. My Regina, who has no longer any secret from her mother, has told me all; and I am fully aware how pure has been your conduct with regard to her, and how worthy of respect was your anxiety on account of Esther. Would that I could repair the hurt I occasioned you. The Elder, softened by your separation from his house, would have spent his fortune to discover Esther, and have even placed her in your arms, could she be converted to the faith of the Christian church. In his anxiety he sent to inquire of me on the subject, though, alas! I have at present no knowledge of her retreat. It is owing to this circumstance, and an idea that I might possibly see you here, that I am present at this feast to-day; for it has been long my wish to meet you face to face,

that I might express my hearty sorrow for the suspicions I formed against you, and desire your forgiveness."

"I must be a most implacable enemy to be able to resist such a request," said Dagobert, smiling, "and I give you, therefore, absolution from the bottom of my heart, though not yet a bishop."

"Is it true then," said Regina, somewhat hastily, "that you have resolved upon immuring yourself in a cloister, and wearing a white frock like the tall monk there, who is looking so smilingly at you? Take not such a step, the knightly garb would befit you much better—you are much too—too young for the cloister."

"Regina," said the mother with a reproving look, "what will the gentleman think of your piety to hear you thus dissuade him from dedicating himself to the sanctuary?"

"Your daughter has the piety of a saint," answered Dagobert; "and this depends not on a cloister, or a pilgrimage, but on God and her conscience. For my part, it is the will and feeling of my own heart, and no command which leads me to the step I am about to take."

"That's sad to hear," said Regina, letting her head sink sorrowfully upon her bosom, "I did not believe you when you said by the forest that it was your determination to live alone in the world; but I now see that you spoke bitterly in earnest." "What," she continued in answer to Dagobert's repeated expression of his resolution, "what if I should take the veil in order to free you from your oath?"

As she said this her eyes sparkled with unusual vivacity, and the young man regarded her with mute astonishment. His eyes were then suddenly fixed on the ground, and he seemed to have lost his power of framing a reply. At length Regina said, "attempt not to restrain me, my mother. From this table I go to the convent, and sure am I, if I can thereby free this gentleman, that I shall never repent of having done so."

Her mother looked at her as she spoke, and raised her countenance, glowing with a half-smiling, half-uneasy expression. Dagobert, deeply moved, exclaimed, "That would be to mar the roses of your youth, lovely girl. Such beauty as yours is too good for the cloister. But receive my thanks for the sympathy you have shown me." He was then

for a minute silent; but, afterwards continued, “The knowledge that I enjoy your pity, will be to me as an angel, which nothing shall separate from me, in my freely entered and chosen prison.”

“Is that the speech of a young German?” asked Diether, who only heard the last two or three words. “Is that the speech of a young Reichstadter, or of an old Burgher? O, my son, thou troublest thy father sadly. Reflect—my conscience is at rest, and the holy father has left your choice free; your obstinacy, however, teaches you to despise the indulgence of the church.”

Dagobert returned a few soothing words to this speech of his father, and endeavoured to convince him, that it was rather by a feeling of duty than any thing else, that he was influenced; but the latter shook his head incredulously, and murmured something that could not be distinctly heard. His attention, however, was at that moment called to Margaret, who came up with her keys by her side, like an anxious housewife, and giving him a sign with her eyes, stole into the next room.

“See,” said he, immediately taking Dago-

bert by the hand, "How the goblet has inspired our guests; the women even feel the influence of the Venetian grapes and almonds, which stand before them. All is happy on this twofold festival of thy mother's birth-day, and my marriage-day, and every one may thereby see that I am convinced of her innocence, and have again taken her to my heart. Let me have a third object in this feast. Let it be also the celebration of thy delivery. Let us remain apart for a few moments; we are at present none of us missed."

On saying this, Diether led his son into the next room, whither they were followed by Margaret. Dagobert, who knew not what was intended, started with surprise, when he saw at the further end of the apartment, seated silently in an arm-chair, a pale, infirm looking female, whom he, with great difficulty, recognised as the once beautiful Wallrade. Moved at the presence of Diether and Dagobert, she raised her wasted form, and supported by the abbess of the White Nuns, advanced with outstretched hand, to meet her father.

"At last I see you again, my father," she said, with a faltering voice. "After you,

hand had been raised in blessing over my head, while I yet lay struggling with death, you turned your face from me, and when you heard that I was recovering, you ceased to visit me; for you felt yourself sufficiently strong to pardon the dying—not the living. I murmured not at your resolve. I merited your wrath. But be not angry, that I have sought to appease your resentment. Your good wife whom I so little knew, and who was a pitying angel to me in my sickness, advised me to prostrate myself before you, and implore your pardon."

The afflicted father prevented Wallrade from falling at his feet, and gently placing her in the chair, directed her to seek forgiveness not of him, but of her brother. Dagobert regarded his emaciated sister with wonder; and as she looked silently at him for a few moments, she appeared the very image of intense suffering. At last, her countenance cleared up, and she said, with a slow, but firm articulation, "Although, my brother, one mother bore us, we have never loved each other, and there was a time, when we thought it a crime even to speak to one another. But my unhappy fate, and the injury I have

suffered, warn me, that if we would seek peace, it must be done while time permits, for death is ever at hand. Forgive me then, my brother, I beseech thee!"

"I forgave thee on thy bed of sickness, and blessed thee also," replied Dagobert. "I have no feeling of anger towards you."

"Take then a gift from me in return," said Wallrade. "Whatever it may be," returned Dagobert, "I will thank thee for it, and take it as a pledge of your affection."

"Will you swear to me then," she replied, "that you will not despise it, however small and insignificant it may be, or however costly and excellent?"

"I do," cried Dagobert, quickly, and the countenance of his sister was lit up with joy. "Accept then your freedom at my hands," said she, with a solemn, deep-toned voice; "leave not our father childless. Be thou to him in the place of him whom he lost. The pope's brief permits either a woman or a man to take the vows, and I shall receive them in your place."

Dagobert, who little suspected such an address, looked at Wallrade, as if uncertain

whether she spoke truth or falsehood. But no change was to be seen in the expression of her features, and she embraced Margaret in testimony of her gratitude, pressing, at the same time, her father's hand with affectionate earnestness. Both, however, still remembered their little Johannes. Dagobert was silent and thoughtful for some time, but at length said, "I can well believe, sister, that your heart grieves at what is past. An earthquake shakes even rocks. But the cost whereby thou doest good is that of the serpent, and would have better become thy former than thy present state. Thou hast taken me in a snare, and destroyed the visions of peace which I had cherished in my mind. If, however, I any longer persisted in my wish, I should not be a man to whom his word is holy: nor ought I to suffer the tears of my father, and of my second mother, to fall any longer on my account. Go, then, in the name of God, in my stead, and serve the Lord; but serve him with a pure, not a false heart. Expect no thanks, however, from me; for you have robbed me, by this stratagem, of that which is dearest to me, the tranquillity which I hoped to gain as a sort of booty saved from the tempestuous whirlpool of

the world." Thus speaking, he turned away, not as one whom a kind hand had delivered from captivity, but with the air of some victim of tyranny, just condemned to the galleys.

"Think you not of your little son, Wallrade?" said the innocent Margaret, "we often esteem a good deed, trifling at first, which we afterwards think cannot be valued too highly."

"Cease, dear lady," said Wallrade, "I have done the act, not so much for his good, as out of love to myself. My business here is not at an end; therefore, my father give me thy blessing, and I will say farewell."

"How," said Diether, "will you depart? Shall not the friends of our house see her to whose sacrifice I owe an heir?"

"What! father!" said Wallrade, with a bitter smile, "would you have me show my countenance to your guests, so ill-fitted to appear among the gay? Their whispers and nods would kill me. I hasten to my cell."

"But, Wallrade," whispered Margaret in her ear, "you will, at least, wait a moment to see your child?"

Wallrade appeared at that instant, all himself again, and cast a look at Margaret, which made

her start, for hell seemed to sparkle in her wrathful countenance. Shaking her head, she at length murmured, “No! no! never—not even in eternity!”

As she thus spoke, she drew her veil close around her, so as to conceal the threatening expression of her features. Margaret, in the mean time, catching Diether by the hand, drew him towards the door, and exclaimed, “O come; how terrified I am! No mother’s heart could be like hers, had not sin turned it into stone.” Diether shook his head, as he followed his wife to the room in which their friends were assembled, and Wallrade retired with the abbess Walburg to the convent. When they arrived there, the latter said, with an inquiring look, “Wallrade, tell me, explain what I heard. Where is now the gentleness which I saw in you, when heavy suffering lay upon your forehead, and every word you spoke was soft and sweet as honey?”

Wallrade, with a malicious smile, replied, “The spirit with which we enter upon life, goes with us to the grave, and is in subjection to the body, though the body is but a frame of dust and ashes. If our limbs be weak, so are our purposes and actions. Are they strong, so also

is our soul ! . In this is the explanation of my conduct. . At the gate of death, I was no longer Wallrade, but a poor earthly creature, sinking into the grave ; when my strength, however, returned, my spirit returned with it, and though I am not yet strong, I can perceive my wonted feelings spreading their wings again, and that I shall be what I was before."

" Thou art as inexplicable as ever," said Walburg, in astonishment. " And wilt thou with these sentiments enter a cloister ? "

" Believe me," replied Wallrade, " the murderer killed me not; but my life's blood is on his sword, and they whose health and beauty are gone to the grave, are not for the world. And shall I return to it, whom a miserable fate has bowed to the ground ? No ! no ! I throw myself into the arms of the church—but not as a penitent, sorrowing sinner—No, rather would I perish ; yet they whom I hate, and shall hate till death, must bless me ; they must kiss the hand which chastised them, and say aloud, ' She has become our benefactress ! We have mistaken her ! ' Whilst I offer up a sacrifice for the good of this brother, I gain the praise of holiness for myself, and prepare a hell for every one

beside. Dagobert remains at home ; the serpent of suspicion will thus again deposit its venom there ; envy and deceit will again have their home there, and Dagobert himself, who, with his enthusiasm, would have been happy in a cloister, will now be the most miserable of mortals. By the same means I also avenge myself upon the priest, my uncle, and as for the worthless fruit of my marriage with Von der Rhön, I cast it upon the benevolence of my kindred. I shall thus be freer in the cloister than I was ever before, perhaps, and may enjoy the delicious hope of being revenged on my enemies."

"Cease," exclaimed Walburg, "my limbs tremble as you speak."

"You are indebted to my friendship for this rare candour," said Wallrade, earnestly, "and I have hitherto expected from you, friendship, patience, secrecy, and honourable treatment. I am henceforth to follow a new mode of life, and to pray heaven to aid my revenge ; and so, friend, let the church prepare to receive a new bride ; let it cut off my locks, in which so much power once lay ; let it encircle me with its crown, and then '*Salve Regina.*'"

## CHAPTER X.

THE violent heats of summer had scarcely yielded to the first breeze of a more temperate autumn, when Franckfort saw its streets thronged with strangers from all parts of Europe, who had come laden with every species of merchandise, for the annual September fair. Traders from the other towns of Germany, from France, Italy, England, Flanders, and the most distant kingdoms of the north, formed the busy crowd of anxious traffickers, and their booths exhibited specimens of all the most ornamental or useful commodities of their respective countries. The multitudes which this display attracted together, were almost as innumerable as the sands on the sea-shore; and no species of excitement, or of the usual aids to popular mirth and festivity, was wanting to keep the streets of Franckfort in one continued whirl of gaiety.

"Thunder and hail!" said Gerard von Hulshofen to Dagobert, as he pressed with him through the crowd! "if I do not drive these rascals before me like chaff. Won't that be a noble deed, young master? No answer! What mean you?"

Dagobert regarded the speaker with the air of a person roused out of a sleep, and who had not heard a word of what had been said. Gerard shook his head, and muttered, "You are again in your wonted humour. I advise you to let your lamp go out altogether, and say to the world 'Good night!' But come, it is a shame that you, who can help others, will not help yourself. Change your notions, young sir. That you did not marry as your father desired, was well; for the unmarried man only is his own master; but the reason why *you* would not marry is not a good one. However, be merry now, at least; for man and maid, old and young, are keeping jubilee. Where shall we go?"

"Go and see what you will, yourself," said Dagobert; "but leave me to ramble through the crowd here, where I am little known, and my melancholy attracts no attention."

"And do you think I would leave you m-

ing, as you are, and to have your purse extract-  
ed from your pocket, the first moment you are  
out of my keeping? Hold, even while I speak,  
you are in harm's way. See!"

Dagobert turned round, and beheld a man at his side, who regarded him with a contemptuous look, and then moved away. "What a frightful visage!" exclaimed he. "The hollow socket of his lost eye was visible through the plaster which is intended to cover it! Indeed, were it not for his black beard, I should say he was the image of the miserable Jew, whom I once drew from the hold. Who knows—" He paused for some minutes. "Who knows where the skull of that caitiff whitens;—the thought of him is so interwoven with the recollection of Esther, that I feel my eyes filling with tears."

"Woe's me," cried Gerard, "are you again on the old theme—a plague on the follies of love! The sight of that villainous ugly wretch reminds you, indeed, of the lovely face of a fair girl! But see, what a crowd of pretty maidens press round the jeweller's stall, yonder. Let me while away a few minutes among them, young master, though you have conceived such a horror of beautiful faces! And look! that

round little maiden in the corner—she who is examining the casket so earnestly, and seems feeling for something in her purse—know I not who? That little maid, if this light do not deceive me, is known to us both."

"Who—who is it?" said Dagobert, hastily, looking at the same time eagerly at the booth, while curiosity was visible in all his features. "Is it not," he continued, in a tone of surprise, "the young lady—Regina—von Durning?"

"Indeed it is," said his companion, "as true as there is love and life in the world. And who is it that stands before me now? Are you Dagobert still? Why your face has the evening red upon it!"

"Shall I go?" said Dagobert, to himself, and then taking Gerard by the arm, he began to move away.

"Why do you squeeze my arm so tight?" said his companion, smiling. "You have nothing to fear from the face of a pretty girl. Go and make your bow to her, and then let us depart."

"No, no, not for the world," replied Dagobert, but he had scarcely spoken, when he saw

Regina's head lifted up to beckon him, and he could no longer think of putting his resolution in practice. When he came up to the stall, she said to him, in a whisper, "O dear, sir, you are come to me like an angel in my perplexity. That pale girl there, a dear companion of all you see gathered round the booth, enters the convent next advent, and it is the custom of friends on such occasions to make the intended nun little presents of affection. Rings are signs and preservatives of friendship, it is said; and, therefore, every one has given her a gold ring. I was about to do the same, but I have just discovered that some wicked person has stolen my bag from my girdle; my little treasure was in it, and I am terrified lest I should be regarded by the jeweller as a mere pretended purchaser, and be looked upon in a somewhat similar light by my wealthier friends. Will you, dear sir, be security for me now in this affair. My mother will immediately—" The lovely girl had not done speaking, when the merchant received his demand from Dagobert, who perceiving that his companion had engaged the other young ladies in conversation, said to the thankful and delighted Regina, " You will allow me

now, fair lady, to do in respect to the moment in which I have been so happy to oblige you, as you have done with regard to the memory of your friend! The simple gold ring is fit for a nun, who must hide whatever she carries from the world in a silent cell: your beauty and free youth must have a richer ornament." So saying, he stretched his hand into the goldsmith's casket, and drew forth from beneath the rest the most beautiful ring it contained—one which was like a king among its vassals. It was of foreign workmanship, and consisted of a sapphire surmounted by a magnificent band of gold and pearls. Regina, in her inexperience and innocence, knew not when Dagobert slipped the precious jewel on her finger what to say, and felt unable either to thank him or refuse the present. The goldsmith, encouraged by the readiness with which Dagobert asked him his demand, began to descant with great volubility on the beauty and value of the ring, and told him that such a miracle of art had never before been seen in Germany, and that it was manufactured at Naples; that a lady of distinction had pledged it to him with many others about ten years ago; and at last, with a roguish smile,

"the gentleman must not fail to observe, that the ring is intended for affianced lovers."

Dagobert started with an unpleasant feeling of surprise at hearing this, and Regina, smiling, drew the jewel from her finger. "I see—I see," she said to herself, and as if just waking from a pleasant dream, "that was it—it was intended—" then turning to Dagobert, and bowing, she said, "It is not right, perhaps, that I should receive from you a present at all; but especially such a costly one as this. Yet I shall keep the ring, and give you many thanks for it, only begging that you will not be affronted if I do not wear it, but like the nun, preserve it unseen in a solitary chamber."

"Do with it as it pleases you," answered Dagobert, evidently relieved from an embarrassment. "Both the gift and the giver are doubly honoured when the former is esteemed worthy of constant, silent regard, without being in daily use." Regina looked earnestly at him as he said this, and then put the ring hastily into her golden-worked boddice. She now, for the first time, thought of looking for her companions, who were still closely engaged in conversation

with the talkative Gerard, and had followed him to the corner of the street, where a dancing bear was exhibiting its accomplishments to their great amusement, and that of the crowd in general. Dagobert led Regina towards the spot, but drawing back, she begged him to conduct her home, where her mother was awaiting her, she feared, with anxiety. Dagobert smiled, and said, "The hesitating tone with which you have put that request would almost make me suspect that you were not in such great haste. But how comes it that you remain cooped up in your lonely house, situated in such a dismal spot, during the fair-time, instead of accepting the friendly invitation of my father and mother?" Regina stooped to adjust the fastening of her sandal, and made no intelligible reply; at length she said, "Ask me not. I cannot, dare not answer your question."

Dagobert said, "You are very cautious," and at the same time felt his cheeks growing hot, he knew not why; "but if," he continued, "you would not keep your eyes as fast fixed on the ground as your smart little feet, I might be able to discover the secret in their clear mirror.

There is, however, a cloud upon your brow; what can there be to trouble a child of heaven like you?"

Regina sighed heavily, and replied, in so low a voice, that it was scarcely audible, "Oh I have my sorrows as well as other people—as well as yourself, young sir."

"May heaven preserve you from griefs such as mine," said Dagobert, deeply moved; "your sorrow is but temporary, and will pass away like the March snow; but to mine there is no end."

Regina looked at him with an air of incredulity, and said, "Believe me, your troubles will soon cease, if you do but attempt to put an end to them yourself."

"Well, fair soothsayer," replied Dagobert, "heaven must confirm what one so like an angel says."

"That savours of impiety," observed the fair girl, shaking her head; "I trust to the help of heaven, and the experience even of the last hour tells me that it will be gracious to me."

"Of the last hour?" asked Dagobert, in surprise, "You awaken my curiosity Who has said . . . ?"

"The ring which you gave me, has said every

thing," replied the blushing, trembling girl. "But not another word," she continued; "we have been standing here at the gate, since the bells tolled. My mother would not be pleased if she saw me. Farewell! Ammon will pay you what you were so kind as to lend me."

"Why this at parting?" inquired Dagobert, who felt loth to leave her; "when shall I again meet you?"

"You ask too much of me," was the reply; "that we see each other again, depends upon yourself." With these words she entered the gate of her dwelling, and Dagobert looked after her for some moments in silence, but his thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the voice of old Ammon, who, heavily laden with parcels of goods from the town, preceded his lady only a few yards. Warning Dagobert of her near approach, he startled him with a sly intimation of his knowledge of Regina's feelings, and the young man, as he withdrew from the gate, questioned himself, with a deeply agitated mind, as to the state of his own heart with respect to the lovely and innocent girl. But the image of Esther rose in his imagination with all its original power over the soul, and he

repeated his vows of eternal constancy to her, his first and best beloved of women.

On waking from his reflections, he found that his gestures, and his speaking to himself as he walked, had attracted the attention of persons in the street, and, somewhat confused at the discovery, he turned into a neighbouring church to hide himself from further observation. There, in the twilight of the cloister, he beheld Florilla engaged in earnest devotion. When she had finished her prayers, he went up to her, and learnt that she was to set out the next morning in the train of her reverend protector. “But I have to impart an unpleasant piece of intelligence,” said she, taking him by the hand, and leading him into a more retired part of the building.

“Unpleasant intelligence!” repeated Dagobert, “I have been so long accustomed to sorrow, that I have nothing left to fear, and what to you seems a melancholy circumstance, will probably be to me of no importance. My father, mother, and nephew, are all well; I am, therefore, vulnerable only on one side, and that thy dart cannot reach.”

“No?” said Florilla, “what if I name Esther?”

Dagobert's colour forsook his face, as she thus spoke, and without uttering a word, he motioned to her to continue.

"Esther has just been here," she proceeded; "I have seen and spoken to her."

"Here! seen her! spoken to her!" exclaimed Dagobert, with an expression of the most painful curiosity.

"Her former misfortunes in this city, induced her," replied Florilla, "to remain concealed; but even were this not the case, you, Dagobert, she would never see more. She has commissioned me to bring you her last, and eternal farewell!"

Dagobert pressed his hand upon his forehead, to assure himself that what he heard was real, but made no reply.

"You would scarcely know her," resumed Florilla, "were the eye of love not so sharp as it is—so beautiful, so surpassingly beautiful does she look. She seemed to me an eastern queen, as she stood and spoke of you in words of love, or of friendship deeper than love."

"Did she not speak in words of mercy, too?" asked Dagobert, recovering his breath, and catching eagerly at the last words of his companion. "God be praised," he continued, but the next instant, tears streamed down his

cheeks, and he uttered an exclamation, expressive of anguish at her despising her truest friends.

“ No ! she honours them,” was the reply.

“ And can she doubt the truth of my love ? ” said Dagobert, in the full glow of passion ; “ Can she ever have loved me, if this be the case ? Does she not know that love is as eternal as the sun, and as beneficent too ! She has bowed me to the grave by her flight, and the consequent ruin of my hopes ; yet she is still the sole mistress of my affections. She is here again. Let all that is past be forgotten. She must be mine ; let all hindrances be swept away. Let her receive baptism, and our marriage torch shall blaze before all the world ! ”

“ It is too late ! ” sighed Florilla.

“ Too late ! ” replied Dagobert, passionately ; “ Too late ! wherefore ? Are we become aged in the few months of our separation ? Or is there no longer a priest in existence, to receive her into the covenant of Christ, and to bless our union ? Oh, Florilla, I mistrust thee. Thou hast spoken for my good ; but the words of friendship are not those of love. Say, where is she ? Though she be hidden from her enemies

she must not be so from those who love her. Let me hasten to receive the words of happiness from her lips !”

“ It is too late !” rejoined Florilla, with tears in her eyes. “ Even while we speak, swift horses bear the loveliest of her race from these dangerous walls. She can never see you more ; but—” she paused, as if doubtful whether to go on—“ The gold of the Duke might lie ready for her. Her husband will desire it of you to-day—”

Lagobert staggered, while she thus spoke, as if struck with a sudden stupor, and the cold perspiration started upon his forehead ; but grasping Florilla’s hand, convulsively, he at length said, “ What have you uttered ? Her husband ! Her husband ! O, retract that horrid word !”

“ You must have heard it some time or other,” said Florilla, in a dejected tone, and as soothingly as she could. “ Her husband is the exchanger, Joel von Lutnick ; the right hand man of the bishop, in money concerns, and as rich as an emperor. Esther’s brother persuaded her to give him her hand, though her heart was repugnant to the idea. As her father was ab-

sent, and there appeared no possibility of her union with you, his arguments prevailed ; she at length yielded to his entreaties, and the will of fate, and became the wife of Joel. She has now been married three months, and has learnt to love her husband, though still mindful of the object of her first, and undying affection. She will become a mother——”

“Enough!” exclaimed Dagobert, with a voice half-stifled by agony ; “enough! Yet, unexpected and terrible as is my sorrow, I will bear it ; and the deep wound which my soul has received shall be cured with a burning iron, even as some poisoned wound of the body. All the blessings of the earth rest upon thy head, Florilla ! The sharp edge of thy speech has cut so deep into my soul, that it has rendered it sound again. All the happiness that I have the power to give shalt thou enjoy.”

“What am I to understand by your words ?” asked Florilla, inquisitively.

“It is the lightest and pleasantest thing in the world,” said Dagobert, with a bitter smile. “I will fulfil the wishes of my father and step-mother. I will ask them, where is she whom

you would have me espouse? Name her, and I will do your bidding."

"Will you, indeed?" said Florilla, smiling through her tears; "and without a choice—without consideration?"

Dagobert passed his hand over his forehead, and said, "Where should I now choose, when all are alike indifferent to me? But leave me to fulfil my intention. Time speeds. The hours are numbered as the gray hairs of my father. Ere he depart, he shall have joy in his son, though my heart be broken by the sacrifice. Farewell, Florilla! you have my thanks."

## CHAPTER XI.

THE Lady Von Dürning was standing, the next day, by her daughter, and each seemed to have exchanged with the other her own individuality. Regina, who had been wont to listen to the voice of her mother with downcast looks, as a submissive child, now stood erect before her, with full confidence beaming in her eyes, and the light of joy casting a rosy bloom over her whole countenance. Her mother, on the contrary, stood with her eyes fixed on the ground, while a doubtful smile played on her lips, as if she was thinking of something much to be desired, but which she saw little hope of attaining. At length she said, looking at the happy countenance of Regina, “ Are you happy, my child ? ”

“ I am indeed,” was the reply; “ I seem as

if in a delightful dream!" The mother shook her head with a smile, and stepping to the open window, exclaimed, "yonder go the venerable elder in his stately robe, and his son in the short cloak which so well becomes him." Regina peeped blushing over her mother's shoulder, and whispered, " Farewell ; but come back quickly thou good, good man."

" He will come back too soon," said her mother, ironically. " Who would have thought this yesterday ? "

" Dear mother," rejoined Regina, " I have known since yesterday, that Dagobert will for certain be my husband." She then entered into a long detail of her reasons for entertaining this hope. Of these one of the most important was, that she had been told by a man wearing a plaster on one of his eyes, and of singularly strange and wretched appearance, who exercised the trade of a fortune-teller, that she should be married to a person, the description of whom could only answer to Dagobert. The wretched looking man who had told her this had attracted her notice as she looked from the window one day when her mother was from home, and she had heard his revelation with

trembling pleasure. Even the presenting of the ring which Dagobert gave her, a few days after was foretold; and the Lady von Dürning, having slightly reproached Regina for not mentioning these circumstances till the present time, resolved upon immediately communicating them to her friends, and asking their advice.

The happy and innocent girl was no sooner left alone, than her thoughts again ran riot with delight and hope: but as she stood by the window, sufficiently employed with the joyous visions which rose continually before her eyes, her attention was suddenly attracted by the appearance, among a crowd in the street, of the same gloomy-looking, miserable man, who had told her fortune, as she had described to her mother. Astonished and almost alarmed at his mysterious air, she was still more so, when, as if in instantaneous obedience to her look, she saw him at the door of her dwelling. "Art thou here?" she said to him, "art thou everywhere?"

"Yea, as the wind is, fair maiden," was the reply; "everywhere, where there are money and charitable souls."

"Thou canst not want charity," said Regina,

"thine art should bring thee chests full of money."

"Liberality is not so common in the world," returned the man.

"I will not be the meanest, at any rate," said Regina, placing, as she spoke, a piece of silver in the hand of the astonished mendicant. "Thy prediction has come to pass, thou strange, but true prophet." She then innocently told him what had occurred, and he departed, assuring her that he would be at her wedding, and not alone, and that she should be happy for ever.

On leaving the house of the Lady Von Dürning, the pretended fortune-teller again plunged into the midst of the crowd, and resumed his more profitable occupation of robbing the wealthy citizens whom he had the fortune to meet, of their purses, watches, and trinkets. In the course of his proceedings, he was joined by another of the same trade, and having satisfied their cupidity for the time, and narrowly escaped detection, they proceeded together to a small and obscure public-house, to enjoy themselves after their day's labour. The little inn to which they thus adjourned, was kept by one Brandling, and had formerly been

the frequent resort, not only of the middle class of tradesmen, but of persons in a higher rank, who made it their retreat when carrying on some illicit amour. It had now, however, been for some time deserted, owing to the greater watchfulness of the magistrates, and was scarcely known but to a few of the most suspicious characters, who still found it a convenient lodging-house.

The two men, as they entered the settle, saw two others, whom they recognised as comrades, and embraced with the affection of old friends. “Wine, Brandling, wine!” was the immediate cry, and the landlord soon after appeared with a can in his hand, but with a cautious look and step, which seemed to awaken the apprehension of his guests.

“Is it all ripe for us?” asked Zodiah.

“Yea! as I hope for mercy in death, is it. All who have served under the drunken Marten, all who have escaped the judge, are here, and I can answer for them!” “The twenty soldiers are also concealed in the city,” said Zodiah’s companion. “And they form a fair band of assassins, who would not mind mur-

dering the priest at the altar, or stealing the chalice out of the hand of the pope."

" 'Tis well ! by thunder and lightning, 'tis well," rejoined the Hornberger. " We have seventeen lads among our followers, all burning for vengeance on those who deprived them of their master."

" Heaven be praised," said Reifenberger. " We may hope then properly to avenge the death of poor Bechtram. But say, when shall the work be begun ?"

" To-morrow," replied Zodiah, hastily. " To-morrow, noble sirs, neither earlier nor later."

" Oh ! oh !" cried the others, " Frederick, your fingers are tingling after the plunder."

" Heaven help me!" murmured the Jew. " It must be to-morrow, or I withdraw my hand."

" Blockhead ! We must have thee with us," said Leuenberg, " to rouse the people, and lead us to the chests and caskets of the rich ones, and show us which houses to burn first."

" That will I, " answered Zodiah ; " or may I be bent double, and become black as night. I will not hazard death without pay, and the gallows are erected for me in these streets. I will

satisfy both your lust of gold, and your lust of revenge."

"Gold and revenge!" cried Hornberg, "by thunder and lightning! the Jew is right. Gold for us! Revenge for Bechtram!"

"Right!" echoed Leuenberg, "a plague upon the Franckforters, and destruction to their houses! but be cautious, friends."

"If we pause a day," answered Zodiah, "the riches of the Netherlands will all be gone, and I, too, shall lose the best part of my revenge. My enemy, young Dagobert Frosch, celebrates his nuptials to-morrow. He has won the bride, but he shall not possess her! I will slay him in the midst of the festival! I have sworn it, and will abide by my oath."

"Young Dagobert! and the old sinner likewise," said Leuenberg, wildly. "Excellent! That determines me. At the marriage, too, I'll dance the farewell dance with my Margaret and Wallrade."

"In heaven's name, as you will!" said Hornberg and the Reifenberger; and a council was immediately held, as to the manner in which their desperate design should be put into execution. Zodiah prepared himself for the

discussion, by removing the thick plaister from his eye, which he said made his forehead burn like an oven, and then proceeded with his plan, till they were suddenly disturbed by the appearance of a man, who seemed to be watching about the street for some one of the party. Zodiah, therefore, resumed his disguise, but going to the door of the room with his companions, their alarm subsided upon finding that it was Brandling's shoemaker, demanding payment for a job, which the worthy landlord had forgotten, it seems, to acknowledge. Brandling pretended to feel for the money in his pocket, though he well knew there was none in it, and then endeavoured to persuade the shoemaker to sit down, and drink out the little debt, but in vain; the good man went away, promising another call the next morning.

Brandling's guests, however, were by no means pleased with the interruption which they had suffered, and he was fiercely threatened with the direst punishment, should any thing again occur to make them doubt his caution or fidelity. Soon after this, a noise was heard in the street, which again attracted their attention, and Brandling was about to go out, when Veit

seized him by the arm, and exclaimed, in a surly tone, "No; we go together, comrade, and the first sign I discover of falsehood in thee, thou shalt feel the point of my dagger." They then went forth, and were followed by the other three. As they entered the street, their ears were saluted by the mingling voices of an immense multitude of people, who were seen thronging the narrow thoroughfare. In answer to their inquiries, it was said, "The brown people of Egypt come! The duke, also out of the land of Africa, approaches!" And Zodiah, who, with one oblique glance of his eye, recognised many of his old acquaintances among the strangers, instantly communicated the fortunate circumstance to his comrades.

The numerous hordes which the people of Franckfort thus saw crowding their streets were as strange in their appearance as in their language, and the powerful band which they formed, presented a very formidable aspect to the authorities of the city. To increase the apprehensions, moreover, of the magistrates, some of the leaders of the strange people proceeded to demand of them permission to rest the next

day in the town. As this request could not be refused without an injudicious display of doubt, it was granted; and the following morning the streets swarmed with foreigners.—Their large sparkling black eyes; their complexions dark as the chestnut; their raven locks, and pearly white teeth, giving them altogether an air of the most striking contrast with that of the multitudes who surrounded them. But nothing could exceed in strangeness the appearance presented by the hordes, of which these were only the forerunners; the wild music of the bells and cymbals which they carried; the half-savage looks of the men leading their dogs; their heavily laden asses, or small rough ponies, and, above all, the remarkable dress of the leader, whose cap was ornamented with a plume of heron's feathers, served to fill the Franckforters with a still greater surprise than they had felt on beholding the entrance of the former hordes. The spears and other weapons with which they were armed, gave them also an air of martial strength, which considerably increased the fears of the authorities, and they very unwillingly saw their guests compose themselves for a day's halt.

But Zodiah and his comrades regarded this event in a very different light to the magistrates, and they were no sooner seated again, before the table at the little inn, than counsel was taken, as to how the brown people might be made to aid them most effectually in their design upon the city. After a strong debate, it was decided, that the assault should commence at the hour of ten the next night, and that Diether's house, which stood in the centre of the town, should be the first attacked; that the elder, his son, Margaret, and the other inmates of the place, among whom Wallrade was expected to be, should instantly fall victims to the intended revenge; and that this being done, no time should be lost in taking possession of the city, and in sacking the habitations of all the other principal people. These propositions were received with various marks of approbation by the conspirators; but just as they had come to the conclusion of the conference, a deep sigh was heard to proceed from one corner of the room in which they were sitting; and, on looking in the direction from which it came, they discovered a boy, about twelve or thirteen years old, who had taken his seat in the chim-

ney corner, and had hitherto escaped their observation.

“Cursed be the breast that gave thee suck, young traitor!” exclaimed Zodiah, with unrestrained fury: “but thy neck must pay for the guilt of thy ears.” So saying, he took the lad between his knees, and was on the point of terminating his existence, when Leuenberg and Hornberg interfered, and the poor boy was allowed to breathe, while he endeavoured to excuse his inopportune intrusion. It was then discovered that he was the landlord’s nephew, Henreich, and the same minute, Brandling entered the room, his cheeks pale and his lips blue, with the agony he felt at the peril in which he saw his nephew. “Take all I have, sirs!” he exclaimed, “but harm not the lad, he is my sister’s son!”

After an angry debate as to what it would be prudent to do on this hazardous occasion, the boy was finally consigned to the cellar, where Brandling was ordered to keep him a close prisoner, under pain of death, till he might be safely set loose. Before, however, he was thus saved from instant destruction, he had been obliged to take a dreadful oath that he would

disclose nothing he had heard to any soul upon earth.

The poor child, with only a sack to lie on, passed the first hours of the night in a feverish slumber, and when he awoke remembered with inexpressible anguish and terror what had passed, the danger which hung over him, and the dreadful oath he had taken not to disclose the frightful things that he had heard. As he thus lay ruminating, a step approached the door of the cellar, and he expected to see the murderous form of one of the men who had threatened him with death; but it was Brandling who appeared, and addressed him in a voice of mingled fear and supplication. He had been threatened, it appears, by Veit, with a public exposure on account of some illicit liquor, and his only hope of averting the evil, rested on the influence which his little relative might exercise on the mind of his accuser. Beseeching him, therefore, to help him in his trouble, he desired him to run with all speed to the house of his godfather, and persuade him by every art in his power to forego his intention. Henreich assented, and being let into the street, ran to the residence of Veit, and having succeeded in his

mission was returning to Brandling, when the merriment of the people preparing for various festivities, especially that at Diether's, recalled to his mind the bitter recollection of what was about to be attempted. Deeply affected, and oppressed with the haste that he had made, he turned into the church of the white nuns with the intention of resting for a few minutes, and composing his thoughts to ask assistance and direction from heaven. Having finished his prayer, he looked round the church, and perceived that it was empty ; then raising himself as high as he could, he peeped through the grate of the choir, and saw only one nun, who seemed to be intently engaged at her devotions. Finding himself to be thus alone, as it were, in the church, he knelt before the image of a Magdalen, and there, with outstretched arms, still mindful of his oath not to disclose what he had heard to any human being, he revealed his troubles to the saintly form, and besought her to avert the impending evils.

The instant he had finished his prayer, he ran hastily from the church ; but his words had not escaped the ears of a human listener : the white nun whom he had seen at her devotions

had heard every syllable, and hastening to one of the other sisters, she said, "Have you heard the boy's confession?" the nun coldly nodded assent. "Was the child mad?" continued the first, "or was he a herald of truth?" The other shook her head, and made no reply. "O, how can you be thus cold, when your own family is in such peril," resumed the first in deep anxiety. "What would you do, then, sister Judith?" asked the other, thoughtfully. "I will speak," replied Judith. "I will tell the abbess, the confessor, and the magistrates. There is no time to be lost."

The nun gazed in silence. Judith, meanwhile, was prepared to seek the choir, but suddenly recollecting, she said to herself, "Duty is to be obeyed: do first what you must, and then what you should. I had nearly forgotten the crucifix of the abbess; I hasten to seek it." Then, addressing the nun, aloud:—"I must return for a moment, most excellent lady; but shall soon be with you; then let us speak out, and in a voice of thunder, how the Lord has shown his power from the heights of Horeb; for the Lord is angry, yet is he mighty in our weakness."

With these words, she drew back the heavy bolts of the door leading to the vaults, and attempted to lift up the huge oak pannels, but spite of all her efforts she was unable, and was about to desist, when the nun, stepping to her assistance, their united strength accomplished the task, and it at length turned upon its hinges. Lighted only by the moon, Judith hastened down the steps, after she had seen the nun disappear by a side-door, along the cloister. Scarcely, however, had the sound of her footsteps died away, and Judith had herself reached the vault, when the nun, hastening back, unfastened the bolts of the great door, and slammed it to again, with a tremendous noise, behind her. The sound re-echoed frightfully through the long aisles, and, terrified at what she had done, the vile woman hurried, conscience-stricken, to her cell. There she breathed freer. "Courage, Wallrade!" she muttered; "if vengeance be not now complete, I henceforth renounce it for ever. Her vain appeals for help, at the vault-door, will only terrify the housekeeper with the idea of ghosts, and make her cross herself while she hastens further off. I may now laugh at destiny—it is in my own hands. The tenth

hour must first strike, before I rescue the city with a single word. I will go see how misfortune triumphs in my house; yea, though perdition await me, and others too. False-hearted Dagobert! could you so soon forget your love in another's arms? It was not so agreed. I have robbed thee of the rare comfort with which thou didst dream to cover thy deceit and faithlessness through life. Happy will I never see thee; and to-day!—what joy!—to-day, thou didst stand on the very brink of all thy joy! Come here; and thou, poor simple bride!—thou hypocritical step-mother, who didst think that thou hadst triumphed over me; hasten hither with your scandal-poisoned tongues, tearing my character to shreds, while you seek to exalt my enemies to the very skies. Already is the priest bustling to attend your death-feasts!"

She shuddered as she gave birth to the horrid thought; and a figure, with time-worn features and white locks—a figure, marked with love and grief, seemed to stand before her, in the twilight. "My father," she sighed, "my father, in human shape: he is the only one in that house who ought not to fall with the rest. No, he is the most virtuous," she cried, in

wild tones, that struck upon her conscience; “and God deals wonderfully with the upright in heart. When God wills it not, the arm of the murderer is paralyzed; his lightning breaks forth; and something good ever springs from his wonder-working word. Be of good cheer, Wallrade; talk not thus low and dastardly. Among such sins, God will search out thine, and keep them in remembrance.”

Thus wildly contrasting her vicious life with her troubled conscience—consoling, accusing herself, did this base-minded woman pass the hours, anticipating the horrid wretchedness that would soon desolate her father’s house. The thought of her father and her son held her back; but the impulse of darker passion, and a certain reckless desire to meet her fate half way, extinguished the last sparks of affection in her breast. She had never known a mother’s love, and the recollection of the hated father of the little Johannes was already exciting her to the most dreadful resolve of delivering him over, without a touch of pity, to the worst fate.

While she was thus brooding sullenly in her dark cell alone, and the unhappy Judith was lost in the deep recesses of the vaults, the night grew

darker and more dark ; the streets were deserted, the public houses began to fill, and the song and the dance were heard. All the conspirators were, by this time, assembled at the little inn, prepared to commence their work of slaughter.

It had some time struck the ninth hour, and with impatience the robbers waited to start up at the sound of the tenth. To beguile time and anxiety, the shepherd emptied jug after jug, and the Reiffenberger as well as Veit von Leuenberg took their full share. Zodiah meantime was keeping fast, and advised the guides, with the others who had joined them at the evening carouse, to keep their heads clear in order not to neglect their duty.

“ How the Jew prattles,” exclaimed the Reiffenberger, rudely. “ A jolly fellow, and a brave soldier must drink like devils, if they are to fight like them. In open field he is mistaken for a wine fog ; and his enemy cannot see where to strike. But to avoid a ball clearer eyes are required.”

“ Mind, mind,” retorted the Jew, bitterly, “ we shall see which of us has the laugh in the end, I with my clear vision, or you when half

blind. I, and my companions, these good friends, must strive to do our best."

"Plague and pestilence!" thundered Leuenberg; "a short life and a merry one. How goes the proverb, brother Hornberg?"

"Leave me alone, with your buffoonery," replied Hornberg, emptying a fresh glass, and then smashing it upon the table; I know a better song—

"A year's old wine before the fight  
Has many a hero made, my boys."

And so will we maintain it to-day. Thunder, lightning, hail, and storm! another half hour, and we begin the pretty dance. The good saints have till now shielded us well. Among all the city rogues that have confronted us, not one has recognized us, for I have my spy in the place; Reiffenberg here is rich enough to roof his house, and pave his court with gold pieces. Not once have they dared to meddle with the Jew Christian, though under ban of city, emperor, and empire."

Zodiah laughed scornfully. "Know you, brave sirs, whence that comes? I have never got

drunk—to be sober is to be wise; for every farthing won by the tippling sot, the sober man wins a pound.”

“ Bah!” exclaimed Leuenberg, “ we could as easily be Jews as sober Christian knights. Make our gang feed on an onion, hard bread, and foul water.”

“ Cursed dog, that thou wert seized with cramps and lameness!” muttered the Jew, while he stooped under the table to disguise the expression of his hate, as if to reach up a knife.

“ Give over, then, Frederick,” grumbled Hornberg, “ one Messiah is as good as another, and he who ventures to sneer at him has to deal with me. But where the devil stays the host? Here have I been knocking for a fresh supply, and yet there is more Franckfort wine in his cellar, than water in his well.”

In vain did Zodiah try to dissuade him, he only thundered the harder upon the table, until at length he brought the host up. Delighted with Henreich’s welcome message, yet anxious as to the coming night, he paced the place like

a restless spirit, and was only recalled to himself by care for his house, and the voice of his customers, which kept their usual hold on him.

“Gad a mercy,” cried he, “Gentles, make not so uproarious a din in a decent house! The guests in the chamber will observe it, and make awkward inquiries, and all armed and equipped as you are, to be seen—”

“Hold thy tongue, hound,” interrupted Hornberg, “are we not lords and masters, thou, our lacquey, and ere long we shall be able to say the same for all Franckfort. Bestir thee and bring us wine, or I discard thee my service. Heaven have mercy on thy poor soul; for each bottle shouldst thou have a knock on thy ass’s pate.”

“Wine, rogue, wine, this—there is water in it—water,” muttered the Jew to the terrified host, who ran to bring a purer specimen of his treasures. With him went a trooper of Reiffenberg into the other room, towards whom the curiosity of the guests was speedily directed. Holloa, there; how goes it—what news?”

“All quiet, my masters—all in their place.

I have taken measures that none budge before you have time to lead up your friends. They look for the sign impatiently."

"Not more so than we do," replied Hornberg:—"thunder and lightning!—will time stand still for us. Villain—what hour is it?"

"On the point of ten," was the answer; "the watch is abroad."

"So then let us empty the last flagon," cried Hornberg, "God be praised, we are on the point of action."

"Up with you, arm, comrades," shouted Leuenberg, "bind this faster, my hand hath lost its cunning." "Nor hast thou too much in thy head-piece," returned Hornberg, sneeringly.

"I feel the strength of a bear; I could split an oak tree, let alone a fool's skull;" and raising his huge blade, he made a blow at the wainscot, which gliding off the hard boards, spent itself at last on the Jew, who with hideous din cried out! "woe, woe! what work is this? Ye boors—see that you do better than your masters." Then Zodiah rose with a scornful laugh; the chiefs hurried on their arms in horrible confusion, while their attendants were busily

engaged in obeying their commands. "Thank God," muttered the Jew, "I am about to have my revenge. I was accurst like Cain, but soon will they fly before me; I was trampled in the dust, but they will be driven into utter wretchedness. Why cannot I with this keen knife separate all the necks of my enemies from their bodies? Why is Ben David gone forth into the world, and Esther wandering with her brother, where my dagger cannot reach them? But my curse can follow you—be hell and its firebrands your portion. Amen!"

At this moment the watchmen from the town, and the clock gave out ten; "Now," cried Hornberg—"let the devil loose—now hand to hand; stand fast and be loyal and true, comrades, each to the other."

"We swear it—all," cried the mingled voices of the whole gang.

"And thou, Jew, perform thy duty."

"God will help me to do that," said he, binding his head-piece tighter. "Quick," cried Leuenberg, "the hour is gone; the door is open; the host awaits us in the street." "Baschal, Baschal!" secretly said the Jew;

"we have won—we have won; let us keep our heads clear, and our hands ready." The robbers now pressed to the door, when Brandling stood before them, his face pale, and said, in a under tone full of alarm,

"Hold, hold, or we are lost."—"Lost," thundered Hornberg, as he wielded his weapon; when suddenly a clash of swords, and loud voices calling to "yield in the name of the emperor and the holy tribunal," were heard on all sides. The troops were upon them in a moment; and, seized with a panic, the conspirators ran to hide themselves in any dark corner they could find. Even Leuenberg and the Reiffenberger shuddered at the dreaded name; their swords almost fell from their hands, while their eyes were fixed like hawks on the figures passing and repassing before them. The room instantly filled: "Let no one stir," said a voice, which made Zodiah's blood run cold; he sprang up, threw down the light, and struggled to break through the throng; but the figure in disguise seized him by the head, and pulling off his trappings exposed his face completely to view.

"It is he!" exclaimed the agent of the holy tribunal, hurling the distracted Jew towards his

attendants, who repeated in the same dread and solemn tone, "Yes, by our oath, it is he!"

"Oh, Jehovah, Samuel, Christ, help, save me!" shouted the terrified Jew, anticipating all the horrors of his doom. "Woe is me! help, help!" But his friends remained still; neither did heaven nor hell deign to perform any miracle in the wretch's favour. Even the desperate stab which he dealt against the breast of him in disguise failed, and the knife snapt on his shirt of mail.

"God's grace, thou ruffian," cried the attendants of the holy office, as they seized and bore the helpless criminal from the room.

"Be quick! hang him up!" said the chief. "Where, my lord?" was the reply, "Noose him fast on the iron hook over the door." This command recalled the half-lifeless murderer to himself.

"Ah God! omnipotent God!" he murmured, "I am innocent—dear friends—hear me!"

"No! thou art condemned—thou must die—the Lord have mercy on thy soul!"

Already was the noose run over the hook! In all the agony of approaching death, the Jew

cried out—"I belong not to your tribunal—you cannot doom me. I am a Jew—a servant of the emperor."

"Wert thou not baptised, hell-hound?" asked the officers, "up with him!" In a moment the wretch swung on high; every separate member and muscle of his frame seemed to resist the mandate of death . . . . his gurgling throat heaved and snatched for air; his lips sought to give utterance to one last curse: "Murder—help—pity me, God!" were the last sounds of life, and the polluted soul escaped to its account. The attendants stretched him out; they stuck his knife into his cheek; and then hastened away through the deserted streets. All the guests had before taken flight at sight of the badges of the holy office. Numbers of the horrid gang had been seized, others had fallen, and escaped in the heavy snow. But as they wandered through the solitary streets, filled with horror and remorse, they all at once heard the bells of the churches toll. Numbers of the watch every where appeared on guard; lights were visible in the windows; the trumpets sounded; and soldiers were seen hurrying to the rendezvous. The burgomaster hoisted the natio-

nal banners; the late joyous throngs, seized with a sudden panic, turned upon their steps; and great numbers from the old town hastened to swell the general assembly. The magistrate mounted his horse, to join with speed his knights in the Liebfrau mountains; while the bailiff hastened towards Sachsenhausen; the numerous strangers also in the city flew to arms; cannon were posted before the court-house, and every one expected in anxiety the appearance of an enemy. But the enemy had cast away his arms; and the different conspirators were now skulking about the town, unknowing where to betake themselves. Leuenberg was stupefied with drink, and in vain sought to hasten his steps, while the Hornberger, terrified at the remembrance of Zodiah's execution, imagined that he saw at every corner of the streets, the sword of the executioner. In crossing, however, a small narrow alley, they were met by a troop of soldiers, and the Hornberger's cupidity overcoming both his fears and his confusion of thought, he immediately proceeded to exercise his customary art. Leuenberg, in the mean time, endeavoured to go forward, but in turning a

corner, fell with his whole weight upon some person who met him.

"Plagues and curses," cried he, while the man, muttering some words in reply, sought to extricate himself from his hands. But Veit held him the faster, the more he endeavoured to get loose, having mistaken him for his companion, and whispering in his ear, "Hornberger, you would not have me now! I am as weak as a child, and have been as afraid too, ever since I sent Durning to rest."

"Hound!" cried a strange voice, as he uttered these words, "art thou he who murdered my master? Down with thee, villain." Veit saw, for one instant, the fierce countenance and streaming hair of an aged man, and that look was his last, for Ammon's knife was the next moment buried in his heart.

Ammon paused a minute to reason on what he had done, lamenting only that his master's assassin had not known who it was that avenged him. He then hastened through the thronged streets, lit up by the flames of a house now completely involved in fire. While endeavouring to pass the crowd, which was here considerable, a man, leading a child, addressed

him, and desired him to tell him the way to the Liebfrauenberg, for my mind," said he, "is bewildered amidst this tumult."

"I am going thither," replied Ammon, "and you may follow me, if you have a good conscience; if not, remain behind, for the mayor is there."

"I fear him not on my way," replied the other, calmly, and followed, with his little companion, the rapid steps of old Ammon.

## CHAPTER XII.

FOR more than an hour before the commencement of the intended tumult, Diether's house had been the scene of the most delightful demonstrations of domestic happiness and festivity. The whole of the building was variously adorned for the occasion, and the sounds of mirth, the merry looks of the dancers, and the lively instruments to which their steps were measured, inspired every heart with cheerfulness. But in the midst of the mirth which thus prevailed throughout the house, a tumult was heard, which spread consternation among the company, and the cry of fire was uttered from the lips of all present. The men immediately prepared themselves to go forth, and Diether, notwithstanding the tears of Margaret, placed himself at their head, commanding Dagobert to remain behind, and defend the house and its

trembling inmates. Thus obliged to remain inactive, Dagobert set himself to the task of endeavouring to quiet the fears of the females, who crowded around with looks of the deepest anxiety. His young beautiful bride, pressing his hand in hers, stood with her eyes fixed on him, with an expression of mingled tenderness and sorrow; nor was the appeal lost upon him. With a look of the purest love, he playfully patted her cheek, and said, "Be not alarmed, dear Regina! The city, indeed, seems in a fearful state of agitation to-night; but the citizens of Franckfort are brave, and when united, can resist the worst and most numerous enemy. As for yourself, dearest, you have nothing to fear, with my arm around you." Saying this, he pressed her affectionately to his bosom, and the fond girl, regarding him with beaming eyes, replied, "I fear, indeed, nothing while by your side—but should this dreadful disturbance of our marriage festival, be an omen of what shall happen to ourselves in our new state!"

"Heaven forbid, dear girl!" exclaimed Dagobert earnestly, "that such an idea should find root in your heart! God never deserts his

children ; love Him as I love you, and we cannot but be happy."

" Then you do love me," said Regina, her countenance brightening.

" Most truly do I," rejoined Dagobert, smiling, " nor can I do otherwise, my queen !"

" I must needs believe you," said Regina, with a low sigh, " and yet I cannot do so, without some misgiving. I have long had thoughts on this which now—now that you are my husband, I dare tell you."

" You must, indeed," said Dagobert, again patting her cheek, " tell me all, now that I am your lord."

She then told him, with the innocent candour of a young and loving woman, that she feared the foundation of his affection, which seemed to have led so suddenly to his espousing her, was not sound ; that the image of her, whom he formerly loved, might still lie dormant in his bosom, and that he might have committed a grievous error, in hoping to cure his passion for the Jewess, by his present marriage. These expressions of doubt were met, on the part of Dagobert, with an earnest and tender reply, in which he showed that both reason and admira

tion of Regina's beauty and virtue, had taught and enabled him to give her his whole heart. The bride received this answer with unconcealed delight, and throwing herself into his arms, manifested the truth and happiness of her soul, by looks of indescribable fondness.

While the lovers were thus forgetting themselves in discussing the true state of their affections, a dreadful clamour at the door of the house roused their attention again to the tumult which raged in the city. Little Hans, starting from his sleep, threw himself into the arms of Margaret, and Dagobert demanded of Ammon, as he entered the room, what was the cause of the intrusion.

"A man is at the door, who desires to speak with you," was the reply. "He pertains to the Egyptian people; and as care must be taken against such rabble, I have ordered that his companions should not be admitted."

Dagobert followed Ammon to the door, where he saw a man of a dark-brown complexion, and whose eyes were nearly wholly covered by a profusion of black hair. On Dagobert's looking earnestly at him, he brushed his sable locks from his forehead, and said, with a well-known

voice, "Know you me not, young sir? Am I become altogether a stranger to you?" He stretched forth his hand to the astonished Dagobert, who started back, and exclaimed, "Ben David! Man! Art thou, indeed, he, or am I mocked by a phantom?"

"May God help me! as I am he himself, even as I was born of my mother!" answered Ben David, and took Dagobert's hand as one friend does that of another.

The young man, however, continued to repulse him, and said, in an angry, yet melancholy tone, "What wilt thou here? Thou art outlawed! Tremble for thy proceedings! Fly! fly! wretched man! and destroy not the happiness of my nuptials!"

"Woe! woe!" sighed Ben David, deeply, folding his hands, and looking with an expression of heart-breaking sorrow in Dagobert's face; "and am I, then, to be treated with this insult and contempt? Is this the welcome you give the father of your bride?"

"Of my bride!" exclaimed Dagobert.

"Alas!" said the Jew, "can my long beard and tattered garb destroy all natural feelings towards me?"

Dagobert, softened in some degree by his importunate expressions, discovered to him the error into which he had fallen, and said, "Unhappy man! Esther is not my bride!"

"Not!" cried the astonished Jew.—"Not!" and he struck his hands on his forehead, murmuring, "Unhappy father!" The next moment, however, a sudden light seemed to burst upon his mind, and he exclaimed, with quivering lips—"Not! Praised be God! our Lord and King!"

Dagobert regarded him with a violent conflict of feeling, and the Jew, speedily losing the joyful look which had suddenly lit up his countenance, muttered, "But who knows? It may be worse! Tell me, young sir!" He then said aloud, kissing, at the same time, the hem of Dagobert's garment, "Where is Esther? Perhaps it had been better if she had been united to you, than—"

"Compose yourself," said Dagobert, with a bitter smile: "she is worthy of your love; she married before me, and Joel von Lutnick, the rich Jew, is her husband!"

Ben David regarded Dagobert with an air of bewildered doubt and astonishment, as he ut-

tered these words, then fell at his feet, and exclaimed, trembling with joy, “ Hail to thee ! blessed be thou of the Lord God of Israel ! Thanks to the Prophet Elias and the Angel of Mercy ! grace hath prevailed in the heart of my beloved Esther, whom I now with joy may again call my child. Thus doth the Lord reward them who trust in Him, more than in iron or gold. Had you given me many crowns of pearls and jewels, my heart would not have felt as it now feels. Willingly will I be a miserable Jew, and as the dust under your feet ; but I come not without a design,” continued he, in a more thoughtful manner.

“ You speak of the gold which the duke owed thee,” replied Dagobert ; “ that gold has thy daughter’s husband, Joel, already claimed.”

“ Right !” said the Jew, calmly. “ It is my daughter’s inheritance ; but I speak not of that : I wear a greater treasure in my bosom—a lock of my Esther’s hair, for which I paid the sullen Zodiah my last piece of gold—a jewel which has been preserved by me through every peril, and in every suffering ! No, sir ! I have not spoken of the duke’s gold. I have coveted nothing of your liberality. I am come

to bring a present for your house, and this festival. Unsightly as I am to mingle in such scenes as these, my gift will be acceptable."

"Gift!" exclaimed Dagobert, smiling incredulously.

"Hear me!" returned the Jew. "God's wonders are great! I have wandered through Hungary in search of my bread, or of death, and to see where they murdered my son! The spectre of the other drove me—but you understand not what I mean. I at length, then, found myself among the Egyptian hordes, with whom were many of our people, about to journey with them into the East. Suddenly, however, it came into my thoughts, that I would seek my fortune in Spain; but one day I happened to pass a spot where I beheld a fair and healthy-looking child lying weeping by the grave of an Egyptian woman. I asked him the cause of his sorrow, and he told me that his foster-mother lay there, and that he was now helpless in the world; that the woman had once spoken of carrying him back to his parents, from whom he had been stolen by the gypsies, who employed him, when weak and sick, to assist them in begging; that when he was re-

stored to health, and became incapable of exciting the pity of passengers, they sold him to the Hungarians, and he was taken by the woman, at whose grave he was then weeping. ‘ Know you who your parents are ?’ I said to the child. He smiled, and replied, in a half-foreign language, ‘ Yes ; my name is Johannes Frosch, the little boy of Franckfort : it was thus Willhild always called me.’ Good God ! I felt as if the Shechinah of the Lord was resting on my breast !’

“ Hem !” said Dagobert, “ is that another lie ; or does a merciful God speak truth by your lips ?”

“ Truth ! so may He be my helper !” replied the Jew, his eyes streaming with tears. “ When I arrived here, I was almost in despair, on account of the outlawry against me, and the strict manner in which I was watched. But this day set me free ; and amidst the tumult which reigns in the city, I have brought the child hither in safety.—Let him come in ? for by the God of Israel, and the soul of my father, he is your brother !”

“ Johannes,” said Dagobert, as he went to the door, and already the voice of old Willhild,

who had stolen into the house to give her blessing to Margaret, and the bride and bridegroom, was heard addressing the child. On Dagobert's approach, she appeared with him in her arms, kissing him, while the tears fell copiously from her aged eyes, and pressing him to her bosom as if he had been a child of her own.

"Blessed be the God of mercy!" she said, giving him to Dagobert. "It is, indeed, Johannes! he is well and strong, and he knows me, and has named his parents; he brings happiness to your house!"

"And comfort and joyful peace to my soul," rejoined Ben David, raising his eyes to heaven in grateful praise. "I have now not lived—I have now not struggled in vain! Sorrow has been here through me; but now I am the messenger of joy."

Dagobert flew into the room where the guests were assembled, with Johannes in his arms, and taking him to Margaret, exclaimed, "Mother, see thy son!" and the child rushed into her embrace, crying, "Mother, dear mother, see, I am here again!—thy own little Johannes. I must never leave you more, nor the good man who brought me back. Do you not hear me, dear mother? Poor little Johannes is by you!"

Margaret sunk back upon her seat, overpowered with delight and wonder ; and it is those only who have felt a mother's joy, after a season of affliction, that can rightly comprehend what her feelings were at that moment.

But, in the midst of the confusion which this happy event created, a new guest had entered the room, whose presence was now, for the first time, recognised by the astonished Dagobert and his friends. It was the mayor, who, with a gracious smile, approaching Margaret's chair, kissed her hand, besought her pardon for what had occurred ; made his peace with Dagobert in the same way, and crowned the whole by informing them that peace was restored in the city. He added, that they had been saved through the valour and prudence of the nun, Judith, who had made known to the authorities the evil in preparation, and had thereby preserved the city from destruction, while the wickedness of Wallrade having been discovered, that wretched woman had been condemned to perpetual confinement. The mayor concluded by saying, that the house in which the conspirators had assembled was, notwithstanding all the exertions that were made,

fired by the people, and that Diether had been exerting himself there with the noblest energy, in saving numbers of miserable creatures from destruction or ruin. "But," continued the magistrate, "our gratitude is also due to the honest man, who has converted his former error into good, and is now standing at the door as a stranger. Come hither, David; I know you well, and you have no longer any thing to fear. The ban shall be taken from you, and nothing shall be omitted to prove that I mean well to this house and its friends."

Every one hastened to express their kindly feelings towards the Jew, who had, till now, been regarded with the most ungracious suspicion; and Ammon, who stood listening at the door, could not prevent the tears from starting into his eyes, as he blessed his mistress and her daughter, and thought of the vengeance which he had taken on the murderer of his lord.

At this moment Diether entered the room, and was greeted by all present with loud and affectionate applause. The voice of little Johannes, however, was heard above them all; and he sprung into the arms of his overjoyed father,

repeating again and again that he must never go from them more. With Diether two persons had entered, who were for some minutes unobserved ; but as soon as the excitement was somewhat abated, Dagobert, turning his eyes towards them, discovered with a thrill of anguish, that one of them was Joel, the exchanger of Lutnick, and the other Esther, who, though closely veiled, could not escape his penetrating glance. Margaret was at the moment asking some questions of her husband respecting the riot, when the latter, seeing the strangers, exclaimed, “Am I right? Are not you the person to whom I paid the gold, and the lady—”

“God’s wonder!” here interrupted Ben David, in a tone of wild surprise and joy, “It is not his ghost! . . . It is he himself! Ascher! Ascher! my son! my son!”

“Father! blessed be God for his mercy to you,” cried the veiled female, who, having put aside her veil, now stood revealed to the company as Esther, the Jew’s daughter. To prevent her sinking from agitation, Dagobert, and her happy rival Regina, supported her on their arms ; while the spectators seemed petrified with astonishment at the strange circumstances to which they

were witnesses. There were but two exceptions to this, namely, the mayor, who, ashamed to encounter Esther's looks, stole out of the room; and Ascher, who was busily engaged in a joyful conversation in Hebrew with his father.

"Esther, daughter of Ben David," at length exclaimed Dagobert, "say, why art thou in this house?"

Esther opened her languid eyes at this address, and regarded Dagobert, faint as she was, with a look of the tenderest love. "I desired to see you once again;" she replied, "to witness your happiness in the arms of your delighted parents, and your bride. Fate and the Almighty desired that my heart should be put to this trial . . . . But," and as she said this, a look of heavenly joy mantled upon her cheeks and forehead, "blessed be His grace, that I can see you thus without regret, and be resigned to the dispensations of His wisdom!"

Dagobert and his bride regarded Esther with speechless astonishment, as saying this she turned from them to throw herself into the arms of her father. "Blessed be the Lord!" exclaimed Ben David, "that I see the lost led back to the beautiful tabernacle of Jacob! But it is still

to me as the voice of a dream, that which has been told me of thy marriage ! Where is thy husband, my child ? Let me bless him, with the fingers of my <sup>left</sup> hand, and the words of the righteous.” A deep blush suffused the cheeks of Esther at these words ; she trembled violently, and bowing her head on her father’s shoulder, said, in a faint and tremulous voice, “ By all that is holy I am still a virgin and unwedded !”

Dagobert’s hand shook that of Regina convulsively as he heard these words, and he felt a maddening impulse which it was scarcely possible to subdue. “ Thou wert deceived,” whispered the evil spirit to him, “ in a matter which concerns the happiness of thy life. Is there no means left to change what has happened ? ” But the next moment the better principles of his heart rose in full force, and looking at Regina, whose head rested on his bosom, and who could not venture to meet the eye of Esther, he kissed her tenderly, and whispered an assurance of his love. Then, addressing the Jewish maiden, “ Wonderful woman ! ” he said, calmly, “ I know not whether I ought to hate thee, or love thee with double

ardour, for what thou hast done; but fearest thou not an after-sorrow for the step thou hast taken!"

"No! my friend; for so may I still dare to call thee before all present," replied Esther, with an angelic smile; "we have been sharers together in love; we must also be sharers together in sorrow; but this we cannot feel,—you, in the possession of a pure and lovely being, like your bride, and I, in the consciousness of having fulfilled a sacred duty. Whose eyes are not wet with tears of joy and peace? Two fathers—two mothers—bless my resolution, and the poor Jewess, who, by being baptised, might have made herself a member of this family, but would have always been as a stranger, is now become its true friend. I cannot sufficiently praise the Lord, for having given me resolution to cast a shield around you, and lead you back into the circle of your duty. I would not have seen you again, and complained to heaven when I was once more led near you, fearing that I might thereby disturb, not my own peace—for that was confirmed—but your tranquillity; yet, by the mercy of God, I have thereby discovered my long-lamented father!"

As she said this, she again cast herself on

Ben David's bosom, and Margaret exclaimed—“Admirable girl!” forgetting her former prejudice, and taking her in her arms.

“Behold!” cried Dagobert, at the same time turning to Regina, “one who is more than a Christian.”

Diether, addressing Ben David with swimming eyes, added—“God bless you, thou poor, wandering, blinded man! Thou hast done me good as a brother, and I must love thee as such. Demand what thou wilt for thy recompense.”

The Jew smiled, and embracing his children, replied, “Am I not become a crowned king, full of joy and honour? No, sir, I desire no gift for myself, but I would demand a look of favour for one who has no share in our happiness!” Saying this, he led forth poor little Hans, who had hidden himself behind the chair of his grandfather, who was wholly occupied with his newly-restored son. Hans' eyes were full of tears; he sobbed aloud, and wrung his little hands in the deepest distress. “Do not drive me away, father! and thou, dearest mother, what have I done that thou shouldst forget me for the strange little boy, who looks at me so

ill-temperedly?" He hid himself, when he had said this, between Diether and Margaret, who endeavoured to soothe his sorrow; but Dagobert, seeing the looks with which Johannes regarded him, stepped forward with Regina, and said, "What I once promised, I will now perform, with the permission of my dear wife. This child of an unhappy alliance, of a sister who hates us, and who will hate us to the end; this child, who has no share in his parent's guilt, shall be mine—and thou wilt regard him, my wife, as the first shoot of your union!"

Regina bowed her head with kindly and motherly affection to little Hans, and kissed him as her son.

Diether and his wife now approached the youthful pair, and gave them their blessing, when Esther suddenly drew her father and brother aside, and said, with a sobbing heart, "I cannot, dare not, witness this any longer. I feel that I am but a weak, earthly creature. Help me to be tranquil in performing my duty. Let us hasten from Franckfort, where I can never breathe in peace!"

"We will repair to Innspruck, whither I am

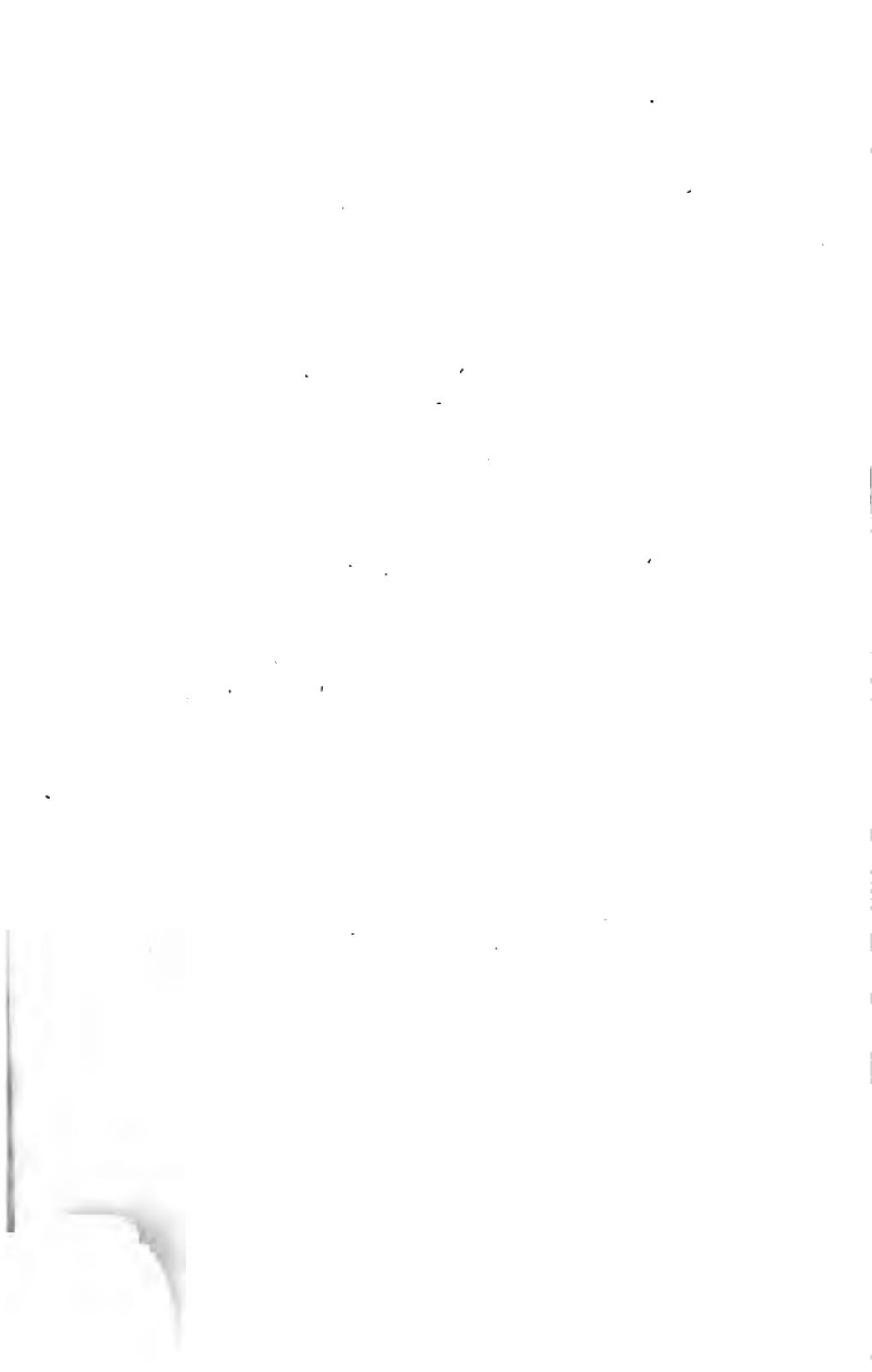
called by the voice of a noble prince," replied her father, raising his hands to heaven. " I am again a free and innocent man. I once more embrace my lost son, and possess a daughter who has learnt to make her passion yield to the love of the Lord, and the doctrines in which we believe. There is joy in Israel, and in the tents of the righteous! Thou, Ascher, shalt be to the latest time a plant worthy the stem of thy fore-fathers; and thou, child Esther, thou shalt receive, as the reward of thy virtue, the hand of the noblest man in Israel!"

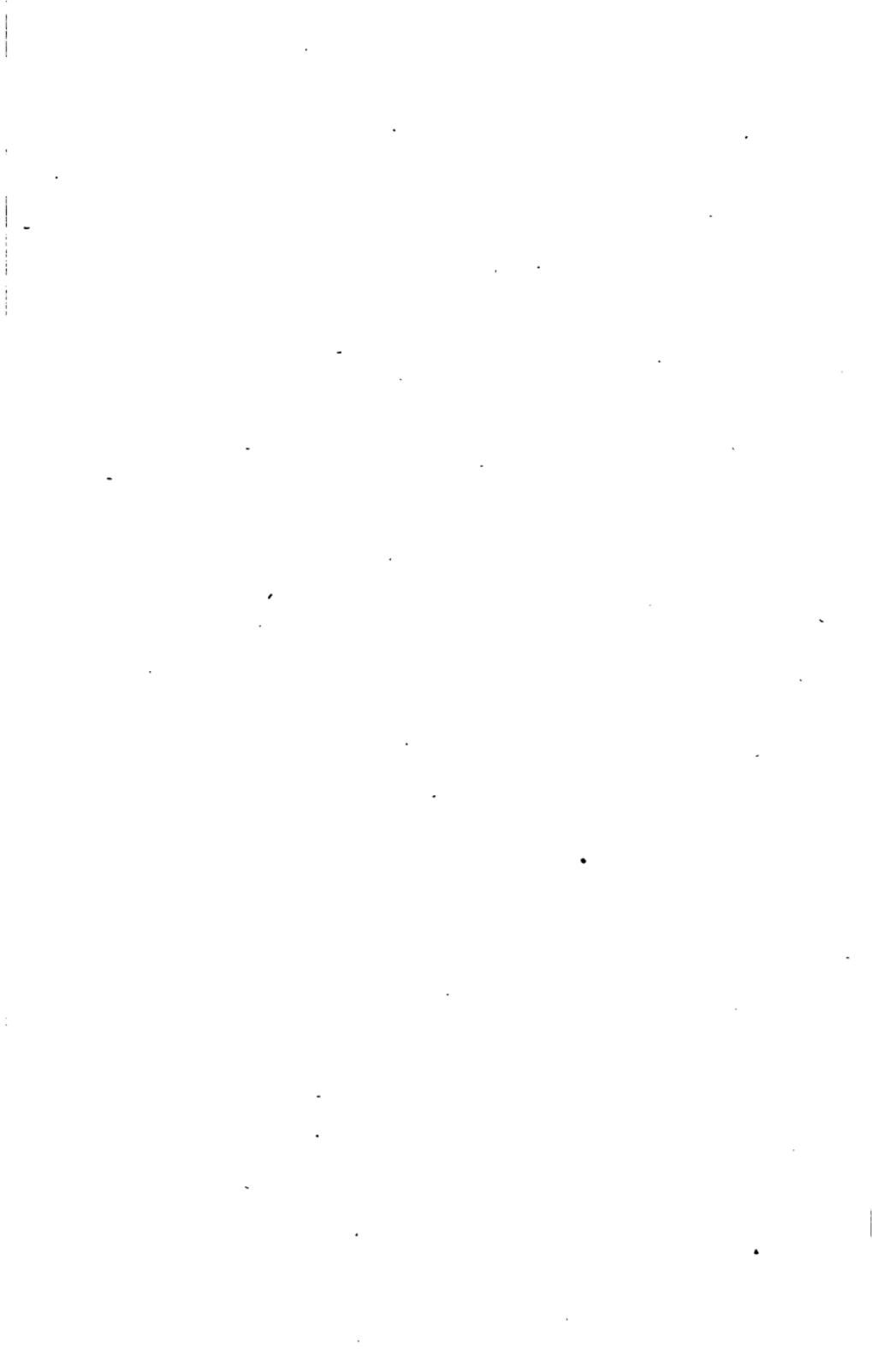
" Never! my father," said Esther with warmth. " Neither to a man of Edom, nor to a man of Israel will thy daughter be ever espoused. I will obey thee till thine eye wax dim in death, and then fulfil alone and in peace the oath I swore to God. Attempt not to change my purpose! The blossom blows only once on the branch; the life-blood of my spring was therein, and it returns not! Remembrance, and the hope of another meeting, are henceforth my consolation. Tranquilly I look back upon the past; tranquilly I look forward to the future. I have remained faithful to the Lord,

and I shall again, believe me, find my friend under the palms of the eternal Zion: my soul is now worthy of him, and it will embrace him and his spouse with the purest delight, amid the harmony of the golden harps of the righteous—amid the hallelujahs of angels!"

END OF VOL. III.

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